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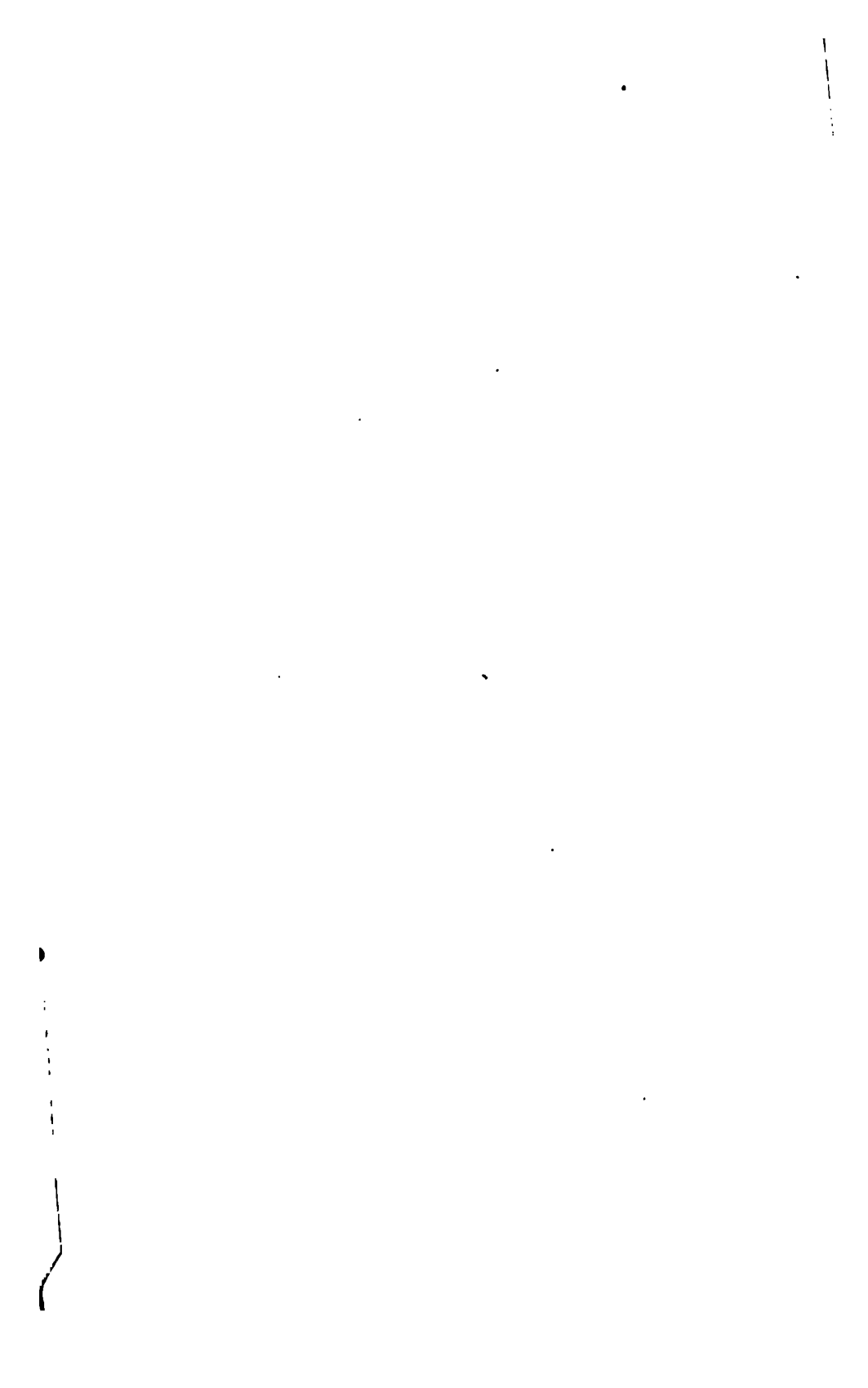
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FROM THE GIFT OF  
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**THE STORY OF THE 34<sup>TH</sup> COMPANY  
(MIDDLESEX) IMPERIAL YEOMANRY**





THIS PHOTOGRAPH OF THE REMNANT OF 84TH CO. (MIDDLESEX) I.Y. WAS TAKEN AT PICKSBURY, O.R.C., FEBRUARY 20TH, 1907.



Kelsey, Richards. Boughton (1). Bradley (2). Meikle. Clifford. Welsberg. Agnew (4). Edmondston. Ralli. Corner.  
 Roberts. Wilshin, T. J. Paparritor. Fowler. Lee, T. (3). Baker. Hunt. Weedon, H.  
 Wilshin, E. V. Marriott. Heenan. Palmer, Lieut. Walker, G. A. Barrington, Lieut.  
 (1) Drowned trying to save a comrade. (2) Died of Enteric. (3) Died of Enteric. (4) Killed at Tweedfontein.

THE STORY OF THE  
34<sup>TH</sup> COMPANY (MIDDLESEX)  
IMPERIAL YEOMANRY

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF PRIVATE NO. 6243

BY  
WILLIAM CORNER

MAJOR IN THE  
"ROYAL ARMY OF MEDICAL OFFICERS"  
"MIDDLESEX VOLUNTARY INFANTRY"

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR*

LONDON: T. FISHER LAWIN  
1, FETTER LANE, ROYAL EXCHANGE  
AND 10, FOSTER SQUARE, E.C. 6



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"SAN ANTONIO DE BEXAR" AND  
"MITLA, AN ARCHÆOLOGICAL STUDY"

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAP*

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## PREFACE

---

“So, for better and for worse,  
Hervé Riel, accept my verse !”

**T**HAT this book may fall into the hands of some readers who are not entirely familiar with the identity of the 34th Company is not improbable, and to ensure for these a clearer understanding of the story herein related it may perhaps be well to restate that the 34th Company was the first of three Imperial Yeomanry Companies raised in the County of Middlesex, the other two being the 35th and the 62nd Companies. The 34th and 35th Companies formed one half of the 11th Battalion, the 33rd East Kents and 36th West Kents being the other half.\*

The 11th Battalion, for the greater part of its campaigning, was a part of the 17th Brigade, which was commanded by Major-General Boyes, and which in turn was a part of the Eighth Division of the great South African Army. The Eighth Division was commanded by Major-General Sir Leslie Rundle, and it operated in the eastern portions of the Orange Free State, which afterwards became the Orange River Colony.

This old 34th Company was begun to be organised in December, 1899. It remained at the front, on active service, from April, 1900, to June, 1901, and during that period it suffered casualties to the amount of about fifty

\* Concerning a re-organisation of the 11th Battalion, see March 5, 1901, page 409.

per cent. of its fighting strength. The complete list of its casualties forms Appendix III. to this volume. It is unnecessary here to enlarge upon its meaning.

The medal given us for this work has three clasps, viz., "Wittebergen;" "Transvaal;" and "Cape Colony."

For most of the view illustrations of the book I am indebted to the kindness of Captains Newnham and Roller, and to Sergeant Le May of the 53rd Company, who put their best "snap shots" at my disposal, for which courtesy I take this opportunity of thanking them. Two illustrations, "A Morning Start," and "One of Prinsloo's Tents," were sent to me by a friend who thought them sufficiently typical to be included. I do not know by whom they were taken or I would here give the proper acknowledgment.

It has been my good fortune that an interest, which from time to time has manifested itself in various helpful and kindly ways, has been maintained in the making of this book from its very beginnings by many of my comrades and friends. It is an interest of which I am proud. It has been at once an encouragement and gratification to me.

I dare not go so far as to name it a justification for these pages. It would savour too much of the old Adam of excuse to say that my comrades "beguiled me," though, in more senses than one, to them belongs the responsibility that these, my notes, have taken book form. Very early in the campaign I began, I confess, to take notes, to take them openly and frequently, but at first aimlessly and certainly without malice aforethought. Nevertheless I must have laid myself open to suspicion, for somehow it got about that I was writing a book, and so one more clear proof that even the appearance of evil should be avoided was established.

Why it was taken for granted that I was plotting such un-original sin was never made very plain to me, but the accusation became so general that I soon found it easier not to deny the impeachment, and finally I became com-

mitted. I was pertinently asked, "If you have not constituted yourself Scribe and Recorder to the Company to what purpose is all your scribbling?" Once being convicted I rolled my somewhat incoherent snowball of notes more diligently than ever, tried to accept the situation gracefully, and began to realise that the best must be made of a bad job. To endeavour to fulfil in a measure certain generous expectations that were expressed, I felt would be the best acknowledgment that I could offer for that kindly interest.

It was quite natural that advice should follow, and it was plenteously offered at almost every stage of the book's growth. Often it was very good. I was told, "Avoid the diary form," "Beware of the continuous narrative," "Your writing must possess a literary merit," "Enlarge upon the fighting; fighting is what the public want to hear about," "Spread on local colour," "Sprinkle Dutch about," "Give 'em beans." (I fancy "'em" did not refer to the horses, but to some shadowy, indefinite authority for whom such a change of diet might be salutary.) "Cut it down, and then cut it down again; a book of 120 pages of large type should more than suffice to tell all there is worth telling about your Company." (It hardly need be stated that this piece of advice did not emanate from a member of our Company.) "Do not make your Preface too long; no one reads a Preface now-a-days." Alas! I fear that my book is altogether an example of how difficult it is to follow good advice, however desirous one might be of profiting by it. I know how many and extensive are its omissions, and that its faults are beyond any power of remedy I possess.

To one counsellor I ventured: "But what do *you* understand by 'local colour'?" "Well," he answered, "for instance, don't you remember that horrible stench of dead horses and cattle that time we marched into — from the east? You might lay stress on that; bring it out." "But that," I protested, "was hardly so much a matter of local colour as of pervading odour?" "Oh,

don't be an idiot," he answered, "you know very well what I mean." And fired as it were by the sudden splendour of local colour, he ran on excitedly, "Don't you remember the frightened rabbits, how they used to scutter through camp, chased by a howling mob of men chucking bayonets, boots, and tins of jam, and how excited the native boys used to get over it all! Then how cunning the buck we drove before us were, knowing a skyline contour better than a prismatic compass. And the swallows, how clever they were at hunting flies disturbed at the edge of racing veldt fires, or fluttering ahead of our horses' feet in the noonday heat as our movement up the ridge disturbed their invisible prey and our invisible foes!" "Capital!" said I. "Capital!" "Oh yes, then the Basutos and their concerts and their concertinas, and how the Sergeant-Major chopped up seven of 'em—concertinas I mean. And don't forget the camp calls—make the most of 'em. 'Roll up for your feed!' 'Stand by your kits!' 'Cawfee ap!' 'From the right number!' 'Fall in the Night Guard!' 'Who's got a match?' and a hundred others. And, I say, what price the I.Y. language! And Cossack posts and pickets and ——" But he then fell upon another side of war—matters too sad to be dragged up in a Preface.

There was food for thought in all this, but oh! he did not mean "local colour" at all, although he thought he did. What he really meant was, "Show us again the great picture as we saw it! Recount to us those things which gave us such vivid impressions! Bring back to us those sensations that still vibrate in our memories!" It was a work of art he desired and not a mere journal of facts, and he was right to demand it, for the subject is worthy. I broke it to him as gently as I could, that for the best of reasons I could not supply it—and that I had not bargained for it, and that it was not down in the specifications.

Another dear good comrade came to me and said, "I

say old chap, I want to write you up some notes about the music and the songs we have sung on trek and in camp. You know how music associates itself with places and things and doings, 'The Queen of the Earth' and 'Annie Laurie' will always seem to us to hover over our experiences at Klip Nek, won't they?—no fear!" Those notes were never written, for did he not all too soon (in the words of a song I mostly associate with him) "Die! Die! Die like a Soldier! Soldier of the Queen!"

A friend to whom I sent my MS. with a hope that he might see his way to write a Preface for me, wrote to me, "Why didn't you make more of the *result* of your Company's doings. You seem to arrive at nothing. What were you supposed to be doing! What was the *object* of all your riding and fighting and trekking up and down? Others will ask this after reading your book—if they do read it. As for a Preface how would this do?

"So they hunted and they hollo'd, till the setting of the sun;  
An' they'd nought to bring away at last, when th' huntin'-day was  
done.

Then one unto the other said, 'This huntin' doesn't pay;  
But we'n powler't up an' down a bit, an' had a rattlin' day.'  
Look ye there!"

That was how it all seemed to my friend. "Point of view," if not everything, stands for a great deal as I have suggested in my title-page.

And that brings me to a last and not least important word. An apology is due to the reader for the recital in the book of so much that seems merely personal incident. It is a part of the author's set design, he felt that a more useful purpose would be served by speaking chiefly of those matters that passed under his eyes and of those things that came within his own experience, and if it should appear that there has been a too frequent reference to routine and a too constant mention of night-guards,

revelles, and hard work (there is much besides) he would have his readers to think that such particulars have not been repeated without consideration, but with a view of insisting on a faithful, useful, and historical picture of the life of a Trooper of the Imperial Yeomanry in the South African War.

WILLIAM CORNER.

WELLINGTON, SOMERSET.

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## CHAPTER I

### PROEM

THE story in hand has dates of beginning and ending <sup>1899</sup>. which are not very indefinite. Its chapters are sandwiched between the last months of 1899 and the summer of 1901. Should an occasional break be made beyond these bounds, I promise that the hedge shall not be greatly damaged nor the gap often trodden. I desire to establish with my reader, if I can, my point of view, and it cannot be said to have been reached by that single life-voyage made within the narrow boundaries I have acknowledged.

What brought the Imperial Yeoman to his attestation? That is too large a question: for Imperial Yeomen were many and reasons were diverse. What brought me to enlist will alone serve the purpose of assisting a reader to an understanding of the experience that guided my choice of the incidents and subjects recorded, or will explain whatever of inclination or bias that may be apparent in my story. My own reasons may not have widely differed from those of the majority of my comrades, yet for all that, no two men's points of view are ever quite the same, therefore—a trespass.

I am an Englishman, one who for many years has lived under other flags, but who, in spite of all temptations, has remained an Englishman, and voiceless and voteless in the politics of any country. My age was more years than I care to tell beyond that limit which the War Office decided was admissible or compatible with efficiency.

## 2 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

I do not think I loved my country one whit the less because I had lived in another for a long time ; the effect of absence was wrought into an adage when yet the world was young. I did, however, acknowledge to myself a double debt, one to the land of my birth, another to that of my most lengthened sojourn. My wistful offer to discharge a part of the score run up against me for salt was refused by the present President of the United States himself, when he was colonel of the Rough Riders that bore his name. That was a great disappointment to me. His rejection was at once kindly, sympathetic and characteristic. He regarded me keenly, weighing me in his balance, which I believe to be delicate and just. He took hold of my hand and scrutinised it, and decided that I had been too unused to severe manual labour to be able to stand the hardships which he expected would be encountered in the path of troopers he led. In that he may have been mistaken : it was to my disadvantage that I had not a robust appearance. Nevertheless, I have the satisfaction of remembering that he hesitated to refuse me, that his final rejection of my service was not made without compunction or without a consultation with his co-worker Colonel Wood, and a medical examination which I now know to have been incompetent. Nor had I cause to find fault with the terms of his decision ; he touched my arm gently and said, "I am very sorry, but you will remember that I have many more applicants than it is possible for me to satisfy." Less than one in three of the enrolled men ever found their way to Cuba, and they went through that short campaign as foot soldiers, their horses, for lack of ready or suitable transport, being left behind. I had many friends in that regiment, and bidding them goodbye was an ordeal to me. Of a few of the more intimate of those I had expected to call comrades, one lost his life in that campaign, and two others, lieutenants and brothers-in-law, whose company in the regiment I had hoped to join, lost their lives together with General Lawton (whom I had also once met), all in the Philippines,

within a few days of each other, and that sad news I learnt on the South African veldt from a stray scrap of newspaper.

In the autumn of 1899, more than a year after my attempt to join the "R.R.R.'s," I found myself once more in England. I had been absent so many years that it was with something of an exile's pride and delight in home that I drank to the full of the exquisite beauty, orderliness, and established glory of England. I leisurely took count of this heritage, in one of the fine old cathedral towns. The threatenings of storm in South Africa did not at first greatly disturb me, where I idled in the background of a fool's paradise. It was not until the beginning of November that I recognised the fly in my precious ointment.

From under "immemorial elms" I looked up to glorious, sun-flecked traceries and lofty spires, and from smooth green lawns, within a close, I heard the sounds of organ, choir, or bells, things that had been a blinding memory to me at times in a Far West, and these and much besides were in the inventory, tangible assets of patriotism and training—

"Here and here did England help me: how can I help England?"

—say,

Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,"

—that was the burning thought. An imperative one. I had seen a mere civilian, at a moment of national peril, make the enrolment and equipment of a regiment of mere civilian troopers the task of a few days. Was there any real reason why the experiment should not be repeated now and here? There was:—the War Office would not accept us, yet!

November saw little progress in this, the right direction: November—a fiat, even, went forth that infantry was preferred. In the daily press a few old knowing hands modestly suggested, as if they feared to appear hypercritical, that the scouting of November   
 ferent. There could

#### 4 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

be no two opinions of that among men familiar with wide stretches of wild country. In the *Times* Sir George Chesney was well and aptly quoted on Boer tactics; Sir H. H. Howorth and others were wondering that we had no cavalry, and a sentiment was gaining ground that colonial experience might prove almost as useful to combatants in this war as a faultless knowledge of parade drill or sword exercise. There were many unwandering Masters of the Seven Seas who had but the vaguest conception of what colonial experience meant—for what virtues, knowledge, or acquirements our soldiers did not possess it stood for, and there was little possibility of explaining although people were so willing and desirous of finding out, for conditions of home and colonial life differed so. An old "Gum-sucker" rather hurt our English complacency, if not our self-respect, by declaring that few of our men knew anything of so simple a matter as the lighting of a fire, which was beginning at the bottom of things with a vengeance, for it is a conceit with every man, a vestige of primal habits, that no one knows better how to start or mend a fire than he himself—and yet how much the most expert of us can learn from Kaffir or savage juggling with a glowing ember and frost-soaked dung!

Something was wrong, we did not exactly know what, and uneasy reflections were expressed, but not very conspicuously during November. Wrangling over the *causes* of the war, a kind of fiddling over a burning question, was more the concern of the hour than the dire necessity for scouts and legs for our army. It was thought we might yet muddle through without them. Mr. Selous was assuring us passionately that the Boer was, besides other virtuous things, a very hospitable person. Hospitality, as is well known, is a common trait of nomadic peoples, who know how it is themselves to be left out in a cold world—as, for instance, the Red Indian and the Arab—and it is an admirable trait, but its cloth is not of that ample width that is required to cover a multitude of

political delinquencies. There were many who yet doubted the existence of a "Dutch Conspiracy." The full significance of evidence of the Reitz-Schreiner-dialogue kind was too apparent to be conspicuous. On November 23rd a friendly German officer wrote to the *Times*: "I take it for granted that you sufficiently understand *at home* the immense gravity of the war as regards the continuance of the British Empire as *Weltreich*, and that you are consequently resolved on victory, cost what it may in time, life, or money sacrifice." A week later Mr. Chamberlain, as if in answer, spoke of this aspect of the question in clear unmistakable language. We were waking up to the situation.

And in December almost every morning paper was as a lash on naked flesh. I think that period has been called "those dark December days." There is no gainsaying it, they were dark days, and we were reminded of what Emerson had said of England: "I see her not dispirited, not weak, but well remembering that she has seen dark days before, indeed with a kind of instinct that she sees a little better in a cloudy day, and that in a storm of battle and calamity she has a secret vigour and a pulse like a cannon."

For my own part I began to feel the serene and sheltered atmosphere of a cathedral town too rare, and I went to London. In certain quarters, not very influential ones yet, there were insistent demands for better scouting and more mounted men. I had my idea (it was a poor patriot who had not), and wanted if possible to share it with others, and discussed it with such persistence, on every occasion that presented itself, that I must have been a nuisance. What I *desired* to become was a *public* nuisance, because I thought I saw that if one wished to gain an attentive hearing the next best thing to being a Duke was to be a public nuisance; so I went to a newspaper office. If I had to go over this short stage of my existence again I think I should "hire a hall," as I was once advised to do!

## 6 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

My letters to the press were not published, although many that seemed to me less to the main point occupied valuable space. At the War Office I encountered that "stony British stare" that passeth all understanding, an excellent accomplishment in its way, more calculated to discourage the enthusiast than to be useful in dealing with the Boer. All this would have been humoursome to any one not in such deadly earnest as I was. I still possess the draft of my last letter, and the reasonableness of its motive certainly stands the test of the light of subsequent events.

CHARING CROSS HOTEL, LONDON,  
*December 19th, 1899.*

*To the Editor of the ———.*

In regard to the raising of Auxiliary Mounted Forces for scouting and fighting purposes in South Africa, I think that you are at last hitting the right nail on the head. (Referring to page — of this day's issue of the ———.) Will you grant me, as one desirous of joining such a force, the privilege of a portion of your space.

Why should the Mother Country delay to appeal to that same class from which the Colonials are drawing their contingents, to men whose chief incentive to fight is their country's peril? If we raised some troops from that class, men who could think intelligently, as well as ride and shoot, a sprinkling of those coming forward would be men who have some knowledge of the veldt, scrub, or prairie, old Colonials or travellers, and together they would constitute a fine fighting force, helpful to their country in these troublous days. Those who have lived in England only must find it difficult to grasp the true inwardness of the interminable and baffling sameness of hills and plains encountered in a wild country of great extent, and they could look for some help and guidance in their training to those who had been about the world a bit. I honour our Army and its mighty deeds as much as any man, but in this South African fighting there are things it might have learnt with profit from the experience of those who have lived the pioneer or Colonial life, or it would not now appear quite so much like the square peg in the round hole.

Is not much of our present humiliation largely due to that spirit of contempt in which the War Office affects to hold the "amateur soldier" of the kind I have described? A correspondent recalls in to-day's issue of one of your contemporaries an exhibition of that spirit, and as it is brought up by an officer of some distinction

it may be forgiven if I, a civilian, bring it to your notice to illustrate my point. It was asked, it would appear, "What could such men know of any value who had not passed through the Staff College or had not studied Hamley *On the Art of War*? The slaughter of Isandhlwana was the result." If the name of any of our recent defeats were substituted for Isandhlwana would not the words be equally appropriate to-day?

That there is a great pressure of such material within our gates we have the most ample proof from the letters appearing in the daily press. I have met many men of this class who have looked or groped for encouragement in Army Headquarters, and they have been handed little pamphlets setting forth the advantages to be gained by joining the army. But these men, with reason and common sense, do not wish to join the cavalry of the Regular Army; they believe they can be of greater service.

For myself, I have had some years' experience of rough riding in Texas and Mexico. I was in San Antonio when Colonel Roosevelt got together his famous body of Rough Riders for the Cuban War. They proved to be persistent pushers to the front, stayers and good fighters, and had necessity arisen, would have proved good scouts and a mobile force. The magnet that drew them together was a born leader. Cannot such a man be found for us! I am sure that a regiment could be formed in three weeks if the right man would but speak the word. The leader must be one who dares to act, act at once, independently if necessary, and if we can get a good regiment the War Office cannot refuse to use us.

I. Let the leader (he need not necessarily be the commander finally chosen for the front) try to obtain the approval and recognition of the War Office, but let him continue the work of assembling the men until it is obtained.

II. Appoint a committee of old officers to assist the leader in the choice of the right sort of officers and non-commissioned officers.

III. Appoint a committee of honourable, wealthy, and patriotic men to assist the enterprise with means and advice.

IV. The loan of a large field, park, or common must be obtained near a port of embarkation, say Liverpool or Southampton, where the men may train and camp.

V. As many as could would bring horses. The best kind of horse should be described, and the mount approved by a veterinary. A fixed price should be named that would be allowed to any man bringing his own horse. He could bring as much better one as he chose, the allowance to be the same in all cases.

VI. Men should be allowed to bring only such simple kit as the regulations to be framed would permit.

On such lines, not only one, but several good regiments could be raised for active service.

## 8 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

I have only sketched the first essentials of action; questions of arms, clothing, equipment, transport, etc., would be properly considered in the course of things.

(Signed) WILLIAM CORNER.

There were good and sufficient reasons, I dare say, why this letter was not published. At the ——— office I asked for an interview with the editor. I was conducted to the heights of Parnassus in a lift. In one of the top stories of a busy newspaper building I received a pleasant and not unsympathetic reception from a young man of a rather serious and intellectual type of face. After hearing what I had to say he said, "I am glad to be able to tell you that the War Office has under consideration some scheme for the raising of a mounted force, the groundwork of which will be the Yeomanry of the country. You will be able to obtain particulars of it if you watch the papers for the next few days, perhaps information will be published to-morrow." This news came to me somewhat in the nature of a surprise, but it seemed to solve the question as far as I was concerned, and I told him so. I asked, "What would you advise me to do?" He said, "I think I should apply to the Yeomanry Headquarters of your county." I said, "There would be delay in doing that, I am a West of England man. Middlesex will suit me very well." "You are going to join?" he asked. "Yes," I replied, and we bid good-night.

"The Imperial Yeomanry."

The next day the announcement of the scheme was published in the press in the nine \* paragraphs which have

\* Not "eight" as the Imperial Yeomanry Report shows. The announcement seems to have been "edited" for that Report. "Strict uniformity" was very much insisted upon. The original announcement read as follows: From the *Times*, December 20, 1899: "The following important regulations were issued from the War Office last night with reference to the employment of the Yeomanry and Volunteers in South Africa.

### IMPERIAL YEOMANRY.

1. Her Majesty's Government have decided to raise for service in South Africa a mounted infantry force to be named 'The Imperial Yeomanry.'
2. The force will be recruited from the Yeomanry, but Volunteers and



become historical. There was no doubt about the matter, the Government had decided to raise a good, useful body of Mounted Infantry "to be named 'The Imperial Yeomanry.'"

In the spirit of paragraphs five and six there seemed to breathe a promise which so far from being fulfilled was retracted, and a course so utterly opposed to it substituted that, very soon after enlistment, men knew that they had sold themselves, body and soul, to the same old jingling *régime* of parade, pipe-clay, and burnish. There were many recruits to whom this had been the one mortal dread. Discipline and order, self-disciplined and orderly men knew were more than desirable, they knew them to be a necessity in the ranks, and they were prepared to accept them with good grace and faithfully, but the brow-beating and degradation, the utter effacement of the individual, thought to be necessary in our Army to the conversion of the recruit into the trained soldier, had been recalled to mind with disquietude. They thought that it was intended that the yoke would be eased and would be made somewhat lighter; metaphorically, they entertained a Rehoboam unawares, and in Knightsbridge we found that "the young men who had been brought up with him" advised that his little finger should be thicker than his predecessor's loins!

Upon reading the announcement of December 20th I civilians who may possess the requisite qualifications (as given below) will be specially enrolled in the Yeomanry for this purpose.

3. The force will be organised in companies of 115 rank and file, five officers being allotted to each company—viz., one captain and four subalterns, preference being given to Yeomanry officers.

4. Term of enlistment for officers and men will be for one year, or for not less than the period of the war.

5. The officers and men will bring their own horses, clothing, saddlery, and accoutrements. Arms and ammunition, camp equipment and regimental transport will be provided by Government.

6. The men will be dressed in Norfolk jackets of woollen material of neutral colour, breeches and gaiters, lace boots and felt hats. Strict uniformity of pattern will not be insisted upon.

7. The pay will be at cavalry rates, with a capitation grant for horses, clothing, saddles, and accoutrements. All ranks will receive rations from

called at the War Office to see if any information could be gleaned. I was directed to Suffolk Street, and thither I went. A little crowd was there, but no one appeared to be in charge, no one who knew anything. I called again, after a while, and by dint of some insistence I learnt that work had not been begun, "because the office furniture ordered had not arrived!" This was true, as could be seen by the empty little room, but I was in that urgent frame of mind that this seemed to me rather like trifling, and I said so.

Middlesex  
Yeomanry  
Headquarters.

I next found out from a Directory the address of the Middlesex Yeomanry Headquarters, and took cab to 1, Cathcart Road, South Kensington, but nothing could be learnt there, for no definite orders had been received. I came here again and again, meeting many men on an errand similar to my own. Most of them I never afterwards met, a few were of those with whom I was destined to go far. Captain Reiss, of the 6th Dragoon Guards, aided by Sergeant-Majors Peacock and Langley, was willing, as far as his orders went, to be helpful to all who seemed to be likely recruits and who showed serious intentions, but they constantly protested that they had no regular orders, and that we must wait.\* Some of us did.

date of joining. Gratuities and allowances will be those laid down in Special Army Order of May 10, 1899.

8. Applications for enrolment should be addressed to colonels commanding districts, to whom instructions will be immediately issued.

#### *Qualifications.*

9. (a) Candidates must be from 20 to 35 years of age, and of good character.
- (b) Volunteers or civilian candidates must satisfy the colonel of the regiment through which they enlist that they are good riders and marksmen according to Yeomanry standard.
- (c) The standard of physique to be that of the Cavalry of the Line."

\* A correspondent of the *Times* under date of December 28th, wrote in regard to the Imperial Yeomanry. "I should like to know if this is to be a properly constituted body under orders of the War Office. Have officers commanding Yeomanry Regiments received anything whatever official through the usual and proper channel? I certainly know of a Colonel commanding one of the finest Yeomanry Regiments in the country who

They tried to learn something about the men most persistently presenting themselves. Was I able to ride? "I could not remember when I could not ride, and as a cowboy I had ridden bronchos by the Nueces, and as traveller, refractory mules on the foothills of Orizaba and Zempoaltepec." "Ah, I expect you'll do."

Gradually, but all too slowly, the work took shape. Tests. Medical examinations by Dr. Stonham, in Harley Street; rifle tests at Runemede; and riding tests at a riding school occupied the time of some of us. A few good men fell by the wayside, which was a pity, for neither doctors, range sergeants, nor riding-masters are infallible, and there are so many compensating qualifications as to fitness or unfitness in the field of active service that should be considered and weighed. These preliminaries the men went through with a kind of humorous impatience, the chief fault they found was that it was made so difficult for a willing man to serve his country.

The first written order that I received was as follows:—

1, CATHCART ROAD,  
SOUTH KENSINGTON, S.W.  
28.12.99 (*Saturday*).

DEAR SIR,

*Re Imperial Yeomanry.*

Please attend Range at Runemede on Wednesday next.

Trains leave Bishop's Road, 9.25 a.m.

" " Waterloo 9.88 "

By order,

E. L. REISS, Capt.

6th D. Gds.

The first shooting tests were made in frosty weather,

has not been acquainted by the War Office through the properly accredited channels. A list of orders, requirements, etc., has been sent round by the adjutant of a Yeomanry Brigade with no authority whatever shown. Naturally no officer commanding ought to place himself in the awkward predicament of obeying any orders except those of the proper authorities, as his regiment might be practically useless if called upon by the War Office for purposes of mobilisation or any arduous service, an eventuality by no means improbable, when it has been denuded of a number of its best officers and men." In this stick-in-the-mud fashion most precious time was wasted.

when numb fingers were largely responsible for bad scores. The riding tests were amusing. Three horses were brought out through a throng of waiting men into the tan-floored riding school. They were badly frightened by the unusual crowd about their stable doors. I tried hard to be the first man up, but half a dozen men were moved by a similar impulse, and I only managed to be in the second turn of three. I ran forward to catch the horse of a man that had already been disqualified to the sound of the good-natured laughter of the crowd. I saw mine was a good horse and only balked at the hurdle because he was nervous. I patted him and talked to him a bit, and being reassured, he went with me around the school quite at ease, taking everything like a trick horse in a circus.

But we had not attested; it was ever, "there are no orders." The keeping of Christmas was a national habit too strongly established to be disturbed by the war in South Africa: and Imperial Yeomanry work remained stationary for a few days. I spent a rather miserable hotel-Christmas. On Christmas Eve, near midnight, the magnificent bells of St. Martin's struck up, bidding men to be of good cheer, and as once upon a time I had been a ringer I went out with the intention of climbing to the belfry, but all the doors of the Church were locked and I turned as the Christmas bells pealed out, and paid my respects to the national gods of our idolatry, took heart and faith from Gordon and acknowledged myself accountable to that message, its spirit *or* letter, that Nelson, looking out over the Abbey and the seat of our Government, would never cease to signal to his countrymen.

Attestation.

For the next few days I was a constant visitor to 1, Cathcart Road. Still definite orders did not arrive. This waiting about was becoming an expensive business. At last, on the morning of December 28th, I was fortunate in catching Colonel Kenyon Mitford at the office table, and after a few preliminary questions I was allowed to attest—the first private of the 34th Co. Middlesex

Imperial Yeomanry. The Colonel said that I should be called upon by wire in a few days. I returned, by the first train, to my cathedral town to ruminate, a "Soldier of the Queen." \* The next week was a busy one, but I found time to look about for a suitable horse. A friend A Mount. had two or three in mind, and he drove me to the New Forest to see a sturdy forest pony. In the light of subsequent experience in the field that pony would have made an ideal mount, but the limit was fixed at fourteen two, and this pony was just under that height, and had he been a barb from a Soldan's string he would not have found acceptance. An indifferent horse of fourteen three was of another colour, so to speak. We did not understand these things in those days. We do not now. I fell back upon a little hunter, a thoroughbred mare just over the limit, and obtained an "option" from her owner, pending approval. She proved to be a good and faithful friend and a first-class mount.

\* The conditions of service for the Imperial Yeomanry were only fully set forth on January 8, 1900, in twenty-three paragraphs signed by F. M. Commander-in-Chief, Viscount Wolseley.

## CHAPTER II

### KNIGHTSBRIDGE BARRACKS

1900.

ON Thursday evening, January 4th, I received a telegram :

"Report yourself Rutland Gate, Knightsbridge, 12.45 Friday, bring luggage. Raiss."

I returned to London on Friday morning. The interval that had elapsed since I had left London on December 28th, must have been pretty fully occupied by those on whom the organisation of our Company had devolved, in the direction of the tests and examinations of the recruits that presented themselves. On Friday afternoon the men collected about Rutland Yard, scanning each other's faces and questioning one another as to each other's knowledge of imminent movements or proceedings of our new Company. Every one seemed to be equally ignorant of what plans were in hand. Each man, I fancy, felt rather like the new boy among strange schoolfellows. After some delay we were marched across the street into the Knightsbridge Barracks quadrangle, where we found it very wet and sloppy under foot, and we lined up in the chill rain. We were here sorted into four sections of about twenty-seven men each. I found myself a member of Section III. As far as could be made out, the design was to distribute men who had been old Middlesex Yeomen,\* old soldiers, and men who could claim to have

\* About thirty of the old Middlesex County Yeomanry came forward for service in our company for the front.







HENRY SKELLEY DALBIAC.

Killed in Action, May 23, 1900.

*To face page 15.*



had any useful experience, as equally as possible among the four sections. We were then formed into a hollow square and the Articles of War were read out to us; we could not clearly make out the whole text, it appeared to be a sort of an amalgamation of the Riot Act, the Ten Commandments, and the Thirty-nine Articles; but what we caught sufficed to convince us that dread penalties would be meted out to any one who did not behave as became an Englishman in the face of the enemy, to the deserter, and to any man who should dishearten a comrade by spreading false reports, etc. Very likely there was nothing in it all to which a self-respecting man could not say Amen, yet some regretted that the first words addressed to us were of the nature of threats.

Major Dalbiac\* now passed along our lines, scrutinising each man, speaking a word here and there, and asking sundry questions. This was the first sight of our O.C. a man who was to stamp our company with a measure of his own strong individuality, and who was only too soon to leave us but the remembrance of an example of entire regardlessness of danger, of reckless daring and unconquerable gallantry. He was a very handsome man, of exquisitely cut classical features. Quiet, subdued, sad-eyed, as now, he often was. Unofficially, he would speak to one in that quick, soft, half-lisping, musical speech of his; but as a soldier, or in the saddle, his whole nature seemed to change, he blazed up with the untameable energy, movement, and habit of speech of one possessed. Another figure that took part in this first parade, and that was to become familiar to us, was that of Lord Denman; he was then wearing the cap with a tartan that denoted that he belonged to the Royal Scots.

Major Dalbiac.

This organisation of our company occupied the greater part of the afternoon, and it was towards evening when we found our various sections told off to their respective barrack rooms. Section III.'s room was in the second

\* Killed in action May 25, 1900.

storey of the north-west wing; northward, its windows looked out upon Hyde Park.

Barrack Life  
and  
"Training"!

The story of barrack life, the voyage, life at Maitland, and the journey thence to the front are chapters, as far as an account of useful services to the country are concerned, that are immaterial, and were almost better left untold or told quickly. I doubt if my comrades would care to be reminded in detail of those sorry days, and to the taxpayer a recital would be painful reading. I suppose I ought to have enjoyed the farce that was enacted within those barrack walls, but somehow I did not find it amusing. I wince now at the remembrance of the unnecessary torture of those bonds. The waste, the ignorance, the squandering of spirit were appalling. Corruption there also was, as an acute pain, the throb of which one feels, but upon the pole of which one cannot set an exact finger. I would pass over the period without comment, and make of it a mere chronological table for the information of comrades, but for the fact that the same problems of raising forces for the conservation and defence of the Empire and honour of England must recur, the natural law of eternal struggle, if nothing else, would bring them about; perhaps the time when even graver problems will confront us is at no great distance, and I should be lacking in duty if I did not contribute, if it is only a mite, my quota to the piles of data and evidence upon which a common-sense people must build business-like solutions. The system upon which we acquired our so-called training, the disposition of our equipment, parts of our equipment, and our drill, were so inappropriate, so lacking in common-sense as rather to have been the means of inviting further disaster than of giving assistance to our forces in the field. It was only when most of the infernal nonsense was shaken from our style, in the relentless and wholesome grip of necessity, that we became a useful body of men.

I am railing only at the unnecessary, it was that that galled. Men came to the Imperial Yeomanry prepared to



make great self-sacrifices, and to undergo hardships without murmur, but if the regular recruit was punished with whips, their chastisement was with scorpions. They offered to their country, in loyalty and good faith, life, energies, experience, money and time; and all this was accepted, through incompetent, hide-bound officers, in the worst possible faith. Fifteen months of constant active service in the field only served to strengthen convictions I formed, at this period, of the wrong and absurdities then perpetrated. Among our officers there were some notable exceptions, and one of them had a way not only of preserving discipline without offering offence, but of creating in his men an eagerness and zeal to become useful and efficient soldiers; but he left us to join his own regiment after a week or two. Most of the others would not then admit a distinction between the order of intelligence of the material that now came forward, full of enthusiasm to help the army in an hour of need, and the order of intelligence of that which came to the army chiefly through the wiles of the recruiting sergeant, by the argument of gay ribbons and the tankard, the allurements of gorgeous uniforms, or as shiftlessness seeking employment or a hiding-place. "We know how to make men!" They told us they would make men of us! And that all was grist that came to their mill! Further, they seemed to have an idea that their ancient rights as men of superior clay might be encroached upon. It would not do, at any price, to recognise the value or competence of this new "amateur." "We'll teach the . . . what it is to be regulars." "Well, what shall we do with 'em this morning?" "Oh! take 'em out in the Park and give the . . . a leather stretching." That was the officers' attitude as expressed by them. "Pick it up while it's 'ot; wot in the 'el are you stannin' round looking at it for!" was the regular sergeant's idea of training at stables. The men were to be "licked into shape" in the same old spirit-breaking, blackguard way. "In the British Army we tames lions—we does!"

The records show that the 34th Company did good work at the front, but whatever glories they won for themselves were won in spite of, not because of their initial training. I firmly believe that the main reason the original Imperial Yeomanry evinced such a disinclination to resume service was the recollection of this ignorant treatment they received at the hands of their instructors, regular officers, and old army non-coms., and not the remembrance of hardship and peril in the field.

For a week or more there were few horses in the stables, but they came in rapidly, examined in little groups by officers and approved by the veterinary appointed, and we soon had our stalls full. For the first few days we drilled in the gangways of empty stables. What the officers did not know about mounted infantry would have made a big volume, but they assumed a knowledge if they had it not. The regular sergeant with his little pink book, the manual of the rifle, clumsily expounded to the officer, or gave an order, hesitatingly interpreted from the book; perhaps in the execution it did not look quite right, or the flicker of a smile would pass over the face of some old volunteer; again the book would be consulted, or B——, a volunteer sergeant of some years training, would step out of the line and explain how the trick was done, and then the sergeant would bawl out orders, accompanied by vociferous remarks that were not in the manual, to cover his discomfiture and incompetence.

The order of the day was: Reveille at 5 a.m. Early morning stables. Watering. Breakfast. Drill. Mid-day stables. Dinner. Drill. Stables. Tea. Intervals filled in with extra duties, fatigues, stable and night-guards. Lights out 9.30 p.m.

The one mortal terror that haunted me night and day was that I might be counted out, and have to face friends with a lame tale, that I might be found wanting in the proper execution of duties I believed to be so truly futile and unimportant, duties that appertained only to barrack life; and sleepless on my cot at night, or sitting on a

"bucket upside down," on a lonely stable guard, I would school myself to do to the uttermost what was required of me, and next day I would find myself, with apparent patience, soaping the sergeant's boots in the "Yes-sergeant, I'll-give-your-dog-my-dinner" style of the regular army, or, in the barrack yard, long before light, with shirt sleeve tucked up to the arm pit, groping in the sewer trap to see if it was dung or slabs of ice which choked it. What these things had to do with a capacity for pursuing elusive Boers on the veldt Heaven does not know! I knew all this would be changed at the front. I knew from past experiences of life in pioneer camps that the non-essential and ornamental must give place to the vital, useful, and practical. But to survive these barrack ordeals and ideals was the problem that taxed all my resolution and resource.

A week after my arrival in barracks I was given a day's leave of absence, to settle some business matters in the west, and on the return journey I brought my little mare up to town. Young, good-tempered, but nervous, and just off the hunting field, I did not find her, for a few days, the most tractable or docile sort of mount. I did not, as a rider, mind her vagaries, but in the ranks she proved restive, at first, and she earned for me a just share of cursing. What she as little understood as I, was that marvellous, wobbling rear-pack and its construction.\* The merest tyro in such things would know that its fashion was not practical, was impossible, and that in a gallop in earnest the thing must prove as insecure as Gilpin's hat and wig, and must wobble itself to pieces in the first mile, besides wobbling the horse's back sore.

No one seemed to know what was best for mounted infantry, either in the matter of horses, saddles, wallets, method of packing, bridles, bits, rifle or carbine, picketing,

\* "His horse, who never in that sort  
Had handled been before,  
What thing upon his back had got,  
Did wonder more and more."

## 20 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

drill, or, in fine, anything. Every movement or decision was tentative and experimental, or guesswork; nothing appeared to be known by men who ought to have known, who had been paid by the country to know something about their business. They could not dissociate themselves from the idea of cavalry. They were not off with the old love, so could not get on with the new. It would take active service against white and "slim" enemies to make things clear. Congruity was not for this campaign.

Packs and  
Rear-Packs.

I took elevations, section drawings, and ground plans of their wonderful edifices—they were nothing less—else I might have buckled some strap at the wrong hole! Here is a full list, and instructions as to disposal, as given us in our printed orders.

### METHOD OF CARRYING EQUIPMENTS.

#### *On the Person.*

Helmet or slouched hat.  
Frock (khaki).  
Flannel shirt.  
Breeches.  
Drawers.  
Braces.  
Socks.  
Ankle boots.  
Putties.  
Haversack, with field service cap, and balance of day's rations.  
Jack spurs.  
Field dressing and descriptive card.  
Waist belt and frog.  
Bandolier, with 100 rounds .308 ammunition.  
Pocket knife and lanyard.  
Water bottle (full) with strap.  
Rifle, with sling "pull through" and full oil bottle.  
Bayonet and scabbard.

#### *Near Wallet.*

Boot laces (spare).  
Housewife, socks.  
Worsted cap, flannel shirt.

Holdall, with comb, knife, fork, and spoon.  
Shoes (canvas).  
Towel and soap.

*Off Wallet.*

Emergency rations.  
Tin of grease, drawers.  
Horse rubber.  
Brush and curry comb.  
Stable sponge.  
Shoe case, with two shoes and twelve nails.

Nose bag with 6lbs. of corn.  
Surcingle, surcingle pad on Surcingle.  
Rifle bucket.

Cloak on front of saddle.  
Frock (khaki), trousers (khaki), putties, forage net,  
picketing gear, mess tin, and strap.

PICKETING GEAR.

Head rope, built-up rope, heel rope, two pegs, and one mallet for every eight horses.  
Each N.C.O. carries in off wallet, one pair of wire cutters on active service, in addition to articles mentioned above.

METHOD OF CARRYING ARTICLES ON HORSE.

**Cloak.** Rolled 34 inches, *i.e.*, length of bolt to end of barrel of rifle, brown leather cover on top. Small blanket under saddle. Khaki frock and trousers rolled in waterproof sheet, making waist in middle, length to be = length of sword bayonet and wooden part of hilt, *i.e.*, 18 inches.

The foregoing will be carried on the rear of the saddle; also picket pegs and built-up rope with mess-tin on top, the last-named being fastened by the centre baggage strap and behind iron arch.

Shoe case on near side of saddle.

Hoof picker on the shoe case strap, point to the rear.

Nose bag (when empty) on the shoe case, fastened to the baggage strap.

When grain is carried, the strap of the nose bag must be fastened to the back arch of the saddle.

Rifle bucket on off side of saddle. Mallet on near side wallet, head upwards, handle fastened by wallet straps. Surcingle pad under belly of horses.

## ARTICLES TO BE PACKED IN KIT BAG.

Pocket ledger.  
 Boots (ankle one pair).  
 Breeches.  
 Stable bag.  
 Socks (one pair).  
 Towel.  
 Cloth brush.  
 Shaving brush.  
 Razor and case.

The kit bags to be left at the base in charge of the Company Storeman. The boots will be tied together with the soles upward, the regimental number of the man and name of company and battalion being legibly marked on the soles. The boots will be packed last and placed in the mouth of the bag, to admit of their being readily withdrawn should it be found necessary to open them to be forwarded to the front.

BY ORDER.

To climb into such a saddle was a task, a task that was not lessened in its difficulty by protesting horses, the rifle in your hand, the faithless elasticity of new leather,—straps and girths,—and the weight of your throttling harness of belt, bandolier, bayonet, water-bottle, and haversack. If you were fortunate enough, at the word, to cock your leg over that prodigious rear-pack, your neighbour might not have been, and, in that case, it was “dismount,” “prepare to mount,” and “mount,” all over again. What wonder if horses, already, began to develop sore backs?

Within the narrow limits of the Barrack Riding-school, or in the Park, we cavorted at the whim and to the amusement of men who knew less than nothing of the real requirements at the front. If the hook of your hoof-pick or the point of a picketing-pin pointed in the wrong direction, or if a strap-end were not prettily coiled, or if the cloak were rolled thirty-six inches long instead of thirty-four, there was trouble and language. These particulars were points for parade; our sergeant fondly called us “the cavalry section” of the Company, whereby, in an epithet, he proved his inability to



grasp the requirements of the case. It was not what was wanted, and, as I have stated, at the front it was shaken to pieces in the grip of necessity. Picketing-pins and "built up" ropes were, sensibly, soon discarded in favour of a strong, heavy, company rope or "line," carried in the waggon or Cape cart. Neither cloaks nor blankets were rolled, but if carried on horseback at all were allowed to hang as loosely on the saddle as was consistent with safety. "Rear packs," as constructed in our training days, were abolished, and everything became modified. How much wisdom was got, how many and varied were the lessons learnt, may be judged from the "Summary of Recommendations and Suggestions Made" in the Imperial Yeomanry Report, 15th May, 1901. That the Committee desire to purge the army of belief in so much that is obsolete, harmful, and ridiculous wins forgiveness for that furtive, "longing, lingering look behind" they may be detected in casting. There is hardly a suggestion made the wisdom of which common-sense would not have dictated to practical men beforehand. "Everything to be done to make the horse's load as light as possible" (Suggestion 149). That is magnificent—there is but one fault to be found with it; it should have been suggestion *No. 1*.

The Royal Horse Guards, Blue, shared the barracks The Blues. with us; they occupied the west half. For the most part they were a capital lot of fellows. Their drill, sword exercise, pursuing practice, brilliant uniform and speckless turn out was a really beautiful exhibition. None wondered more than these good-natured Blues that our training should have been on lines so harsh. They admitted that they had experienced nothing quite so severe. It was frequently the case that dung-heap work, that rightfully belonged as much to the Guards as to our Company, was preferably given to us, instead of a proper division of the labour being made. So in the same way were the scouring and raking of the quadrangle. There are subtle ways of "rubbing it in," that sort of torture

is made a fine art, to the misery of the recruit. The duties were often purposely prolonged, made arduous, difficult and disagreeable under the assumption that this sort of treatment would inculcate a soldierly willingness and obedience.

The South African veldt is much more like Salisbury Plain than a barrack yard, even when that yard is supplemented, for training purposes, by a limited freedom of Hyde Park. One week on Salisbury Plain would have done us more service than this dreary, futile two months of barrack life. It is true that a central dépôt for the equipment of our new force was convenient, but it was by no means necessary. There were other considerations, no doubt, which caused a decision in favour of barracks, as, for instance, the fear of exposure at this season of the year, for men unused to it. A few days would have sufficed to see suitable shelters built, and it is doubtful if anything, tents, bivouacs, or exposure could have been worse, for either the health or spirit of the men, than the kind of life provided for us. It certainly in no way fitted us for the work we were to do. In the French army, I have read, men learn "to sleep in the cornfields, in the woods, on the rocks, anywhere, without tents, be the ground dry or wet." Perhaps the authorities did not care to undertake such a risk as this implies, so near home. Perhaps suitable equipment for an open-air life was not ready; whatever were the reasons for herding us in barracks, they are to be deplored.

Very few useful lessons were learnt:—there were some. Bare-back riding was one, but sufficient instruction was not given, and our sergeant and the officers invariably rode with saddles. Another was familiarity with the horse. Stable hours were prolonged, so that the man and his mount might become used to each other; so much so, that men bringing up perfectly groomed horses at stable inspections would be sent back, again and again, to continue operations. Men were expected to keep moving during stable hours, whether

their work were completed or not, and I heard them told, by the sergeant, to "pat" their horses if there were nothing else to occupy them. I frequently saw men adopt most peculiar expedients in order to appear as if working, and unintentionally they were well taught the trick of keeping "busy at doing nothing."

There were many trots and rides, rather of a processional kind, up and down, around and about Hyde Park, in various "orders"—"watering," "drill," or "full marching"—and little crowds would assemble to show us their good-will and occasionally to cheer us. Evolutions and drills, on the grass parade grounds of the park, behind the barracks, were mostly close-order movements which we were never required to execute on active service. Many movements were unfamiliar to the officers, and they would be frequently interpreted differently, according to whatsoever tactics—infantry or cavalry—the officer in command had been used. Done by the book, even those exercises that had an origin based on field experience were often grotesquely and unsuitably interpreted. "Scouts out!" an officer would vociferously bawl, and then certain three or four men, who had been appointed "ground scouts," would be required to detach themselves from the line and to thunder headlong to designated points on the parade ground, pulling up their horses suddenly with quite the approved curvet and caricole. It was very pretty. That scouting was a science, requiring eyes, ears, keen faculties of observation and many highly trained qualities was never suggested to us. No ground was prepared for the spirit of Baden-Powell's "Aids" to descend upon. That little book was a sealed letter, in a language not understood. By rote also, we were taught, at times, something of Videttes, Double Videttes, Cossack Posts, Examining Posts, Pickets and what not, but of the adaptability of it all to Active Warfare, no hint was given.

With the Lee Enfield Rifle it was the same tale; had it been an arbalest it could hardly have been a weapon

The Chief  
Arm.

less practically familiar to most of our instructors. It was a matter of weeks to discover that a large consignment of rifles had been incorrectly sighted—so it was alleged—by the manufacturers. I went to one of our Company, who had recently had a year's service in a Dragoon Regiment to ask him some question regarding the sight of the rifle, and the reply I got was, "Well, old chap, to tell you the truth I was a year in the — Dragoons, but I was not *once* required to fire my carbine and I never fired a rifle in my life before now!" I remembered that in unpacking our first case of rifles I wondered to find a sergeant, who was an old Blues corporal, entirely unfamiliar with the action and various parts of the rifle, it seemed to me so incredible that a soldier should be so unacquainted with a chief weapon. Again when we were once at drill, lying in firing line, two lieutenants were standing together just behind me: the day before, one of them had explained, book in hand, to a class about parts of the rifle and their uses; it was a good lesson; among other things he had told us that "fixed sights" was five hundred yards, and that it was obtained by moving the slide forward to the limit, but not erecting the leaf: now, his companion gave us the order "independent firing at fixed sights." I immediately established the sight as we had been taught and went on firing. Presently I heard rasped out just behind me, "Now then, why in the hell can't you put your sight at 'fixed sights' when you're ordered?" I said nothing, but I heard the other officer say in a low voice, "He is right, that is now the regulation 'fixed sights,'" and with that no more was said, and I continued firing without further remark or apology being made to me.

Similar unacquaintance with revisions, similar ignorance was constantly displayed in every department, and they were signs that did not earn confidence. In bringing forward these trivialities, the point I wish to make is that while in other walks of life a man, to be successful and useful in his line, must learn and know his business

practically, technically, and thoroughly, it seemed not to be thought necessary for officers of our army to trouble their heads about many essential details, and as long as the ornamental was not neglected it was nowhere recognised that they were lacking in duty. What would be thought of the civil engineer who did not know his theodolite or level from beginning to end, or of the mate who was awkward with his sextant, or of a textile manufacturer whose interest in looms was of a superficial nature? That is about the kind of inefficiency that obtained among a large body of the officers of our army: they did not know their business. It may be a matter of a natural process of selection, as that men of brains and ability might choose a branch of the service that furnished food for thought, or it may be the difference is due to training, but higher orders of intelligence and wider information are found among officers of the artillery than among those of other branches of the service that I met. The nature of the duties of artillery officers requires them to exercise their minds on problems of mechanics, physics, mathematics, and chemistry; and for similar reasons the naval officer excels. If physical force still figured so predominantly in the winning of battles as formerly, that officers are generally good sportsmen, and that they bring their practice of polo, tennis, football, and other sports to the point of perfection might suffice.

Many ancient and deeply rooted prejudices and usages affect our English views. The social position, and the many good natural qualities of our officers make it a difficult task for any one who would endeavour to point out that there is wide room for improvement in practical directions. "But see," it is urged with pride, "they know so well how to stand up and be shot, look at the averages of casualties, see how they walk to their deaths, and the grand examples they set!" It would be folly to disparage their courage, none doubts it; but by it they are not proved to be not lacking in a practical common-sense knowledge of their profession. It is rightly one of

our most cherished beliefs that certain fine qualities characterise the high-bred English officer, such as courage, calmness, abnegation, chivalry, devotion—power to think and act correctly in the face of the enemy, hardship, difficulty, discouragement, or death—superiority to pain—or those that influence and incite comrades to high deeds, and those that compel in others the indomitable spirit. My own experience seems to carry me still further. I fancy that I have seen that occasion often proves that these same qualities are the exclusive characteristics or possession of no particular class of our race, that in moments of stress or periods of demand for them, something rather like an average or equality is struck among Englishmen. But the inequality of rewards, the disparity of treatment, and many active Regulations of the Army, not to mention a venerable national acquiescence to the existence of class, all tend to create a belief among officers that the qualities I have enumerated have almost become to be the distinguishing attributes of a social class, characteristics of an order; that somehow they are matters more particularly pertaining to caste, breeding, and style, and that they have less to do with our race as a whole, or with training.\* The nation at large is not loth to believe in the existence of such an order, and that the possession by it of these qualities is a source of so much national strength as to lessen the importance of constant watchfulness, attention to progress, preparation, and the ever-altering conditions and modes of warfare, with the result that we are rarely ready for war except in respect of raw material, and as a people we complacently neglect, and allow our authorities to neglect, matters of the most vital importance.

\* There are, of course, officers who think otherwise, for General Baden-Powell says: "Many people will tell you that pluck is not a thing that can be taught a man; it is either born in him or he has not got it at all. But I think that, like many other things, it is almost always in a man, though in some cases it wants developing and bringing out" ("Aids to Scouting").

Mobility was sniffed at; infantry was preferred; the "amateur soldier" despised; pom-poms rejected; individualism was discountenanced; that cavalry as it was in the past was an anachronism could not be grasped; our columns still move at the rate of from two to four miles an hour, although rapid transit in all else is a solved problem—the age's marvel; scarcely any improvement in regard to shelter has been devised upon the tent of Jael, or the tepee of the Indian; we knew the awful importance of pure water, yet took no steps to provide boiled water; swords, kilts, gaudy, inappropriate uniforms, and other varieties of Chinese stink-pot and bug-a-boo warfare were so hard to let go—surely this is evidence that confronts us.

And should one retort, "the possession of virtues is not a sound excuse for a man's ignorance of his business," the *Brilliant Exceptions*, the *Exceptions* and the *Volumes that are Written* may be aligned against one. Undoubtedly they are there, great and glorious names, men who have had the infinite capacity for taking pains, who have paid the minutest attention to detail and who have possessed at the same time those qualities that make men leaders. They are many, it is perfectly true. It is equally true that the average British officer does not know his business as it is necessary for the civilian, the layman, to know his, and that there are too many triflers. I am aware that this is neither a new nor an original proposition, but it agrees with my point of view and I have restated it in that light. The following letter from *The Spectator*, of September 14, 1901, historically fixes it as a complaint that has lasted one hundred and forty years at least :—

THE BRITISH OFFICER, PAST AND PRESENT.

(To the Editor of the "*Spectator*." )

SIR,—The opinion of Major Mauvillon, a competent critic, upon the characteristics of the British soldier, exemplified in the year 1760, when fighting under Duke Ferdinand at Minden and elsewhere,



system must be required, organised upon such principles as, as a people, we apply to our business and affairs. It is not difficult to foresee that it will be a point to be decided, if we shall offer the fair price that attracts good material, whether for rank and file or for officers; if we shall turn to conscription; or to conscription for home defence plus a well-regulated Army. There is much to be said in favour of some form of conscription.

At the end of about two weeks we were all appropriately questioned as to any special qualifications and experiences we might possess. I mentioned that I was familiar with the old needle telegraph instrument. Mr. Prideaux-Brune, on January 16th, in stables, made me "Signaller of the Section," and asked me to master flag wagging as soon as possible. I at once engaged the services of the signaller of the Blues, at two-and-sixpence the hour, and spent all the spare time I had in acquiring the use of the flags for field service. There was no leisure, and I had to take the time mostly out of meal hours, or in the evening, before "lights out," when mind and body were fatigued by the long day's duty. When my turn came for a Sunday pass I even took my teacher to a room in a hotel for my lessons.

I bought the necessary flags, books and "ticker." During the two months we were in barracks the London sun was not available for heliograph instruction for more than a few hours in my unoccupied time, and the lamps, being in limbo, were not in working order. Who of us of the Yeomanry will ever forget the important figure, flash and twinkle, these modes of signalling cut in South African campaigning? And at the time, even to my inexperience, the office of signaller appeared to promise to be a most important one. It occurred to me that if it had been worth while to nominate a man for signaller it would have been also wise to give him the opportunity of making himself proficient. I imagine it was feared that the course of the regulation "licking into shape" might be hindered, for pitchfork, broom, and shovel took pre-





H. S. Dalbiac, Hon. G. W. Walsh, E. C. H. Kennard, Lord Denman.  
(killed.)  
A group of 34th Company Officers at Knightsbridge Barracks.

To face page 32.



S. E. Hall (Killed), W. G. Dixon, J. B. Evans.  
Promoted from the Gun Section.

Photo by Argent Archer (Kensington).



cedence. I was familiar with the uses and utility of them, and had been for many years, and in my mind I could not construct the situation, on the veldt, where such of their uses taught here would prove of first importance. I did, however, all I knew to accept the situation with humility and in good part. Pains and expense came to nothing, for although a battalion signal corps was appointed, on board the *Cymric*, by the officer of, and from the ranks of one of our other sections, it was found in the field that the duties of the Imperial Yeomanry, as the outer guards and scouts of moving columns, seldom called for signal service, for the Company, other than the ready crack of Mauser or of our own rifle fire as we came into touch with the enemy. The Brigade and Battalion staffs were better and more conveniently served by regulars of special training. I only remember a very few occasions on active service when a signaller was inquired for from our ranks.

The monotony of barrack life was at first broken by trips to the range, when the marching on foot through the streets to and from stations or Cathcart Road were enlivened by the men whistling in unison gay marching tunes, much to the entertainment of the passers-by and the loungee in the Park. Lieutenant Wake, who was often in charge of these expeditions, seemed to divine when rifles grew heavy or tiring in our unaccustomed hands, and one could see that the orders for changes from "trail," "slope," or "easy" were often dictated by keen attention to and consideration of the men under him. Our shooting was said to be atrocious, and finally it was alleged that the rifles were incorrectly sighted, and they were returned to Cathcart Road for readjustment.

On January 20th we got our uniforms, and in the following days almost as much primping and fitting prevailed as is said to go on in the tiring-room of a dressmaker, and our men very soon presented a smart appearance in khaki. To obtain a better fit several men

Uniforms!



ordered uniforms from their own tailors on the model of those issued to them. Most of us strictly used the regulation issue of clothes for which many of us of early enlistment had been measured by the contractors' cutter. Many men desired the privilege of wearing the Stohwasser puttee leggings, and purchased them, but a stringent order was given that puttees were uniformly to be used. The officers preferred the leggings, and used them: it was a main distinction in appearance. A number of the men also bought expensive revolvers and Mauser pistols, but they were told that only officers would be allowed to carry that kind of side arm.

About this date I was ordered by my sergeant to shave. A short beard had been my habit for many years, even in a hot climate, and I now begged earnestly of my lieutenant to be let off, urging that the weather, which was quite severe, would make the change a trying one for me. I was peremptorily ordered to shave at once, and I have always held it to have been a most unnecessary discipline, and my intimate comrades regarded it as such. Before the Prince of Wales, at the anterior parade, a beard was forbidden. Before the King, upon our return, hirsute fashions were allowed to pass unheeded. Of course, on active service there were no restrictions as to the fashion of these appendages—in fact, razors were ordered to be left behind at Maitland camp, but most men followed their own fancy.

There was ungrudged, unstinted expenditure in the Company. The men were prompted, in the main, by the idea that if perfect outfit made for efficiency in the field, or compensated in any way for that lack of training which they could not help, it should not be their fault if they were not liberally accoutred. Expensive field-glasses, telescopes, compasses, elaborate knives, and combination tools which held everything from wire-nippers to fleams and needles, wrist watches, gorgeous spurs and emergency flasks, these were merely favourites.

Boots became literally, a sore point with many of the

men. Acting on the assurance of Section 6 of the first announcement, already alluded to, that "strict uniformity of pattern will not be insisted upon," I had taken, upon attestation, the precaution of ordering from my shoemaker two pairs of tan boots of the very best quality. I knew the tremendous importance to a soldier of suitable strong, and, above all, comfortable shoe leather. I was not permitted to wear them, but I smuggled them to the front and have great cause to be thankful that I was able to do so. In the meanwhile, the breaking in of the good but rough and ill-fitting regulation "ammunition" boot—a most useful boot no doubt—caused me, on drill and parade, intense suffering.

The less said about saddlery the better. Our saddle, a hunting pattern, was quite unsuited to the requirements or the demands made upon it, and it was not well or strongly made, and when dressed it was a mere folly. It was a comfortable one, but to afford comfort to the man was not the principal quality necessary in this case. I made friends with a good craftsman, a saddler of the Blues, and paid him to re-sew and strengthen many weak points, and I had a better quality of straps furnished; for that I was reproved. The numnah was for ever slipping from under the saddle, to prevent which I got two leather eyelets inserted in the head and tail of it. This I was cautioned was reprehensible conduct on my part; nevertheless, two weeks later, the necessity for some such device was apparent, and small straps insecurely stitched on the felt material was the one adopted.

With four other Imperial Yeomanry Companies, two Bucks, one Berks, and one Oxfordshire, we were held to be sufficiently smart and well equipped to be inspected on foot, on January 26, 1900, by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, at Albany Street Barracks. This was the first Royal inspection of I. Y. Companies made.

Royal  
Inspection.

A certain spirit of comradeship was by this time growing upon us, men were rubbing off edges and were becoming better known to each other. The formation of sub-



sections was allowed to be, in a measure, a matter of choice or arrangement among the men, subject to the approval of the officers.

Our barrack-room life held many duties of fire-lighting, coal-heaving, sweeping and cleaning, bed or cot-making. Some of these were executed by the mess orderly of the day, some by those of us appointed to special "fatigues." On occasions, especially on a Saturday, a general "section fatigue" was ordered, for more extensive operations, such as raking the barrack-yard and scrubbing the barrack-room floor. The mess-orderly duty, like the daily and nightly stable guards, was taken in rotation by the privates, the turns being checked off in the Orderly Corporal's roll book. The cooking was done at the barrack's "Cook-house," and by the regulars' cooks, and when "Come to the cookhouse door, boys," was sounded, it was the mess orderly's duty to fetch the tea, the roast, hash, potatoes, or whatever there was going. The mess orderly was also the room watchman from reveille to "lights out." At reveille he had to run upstairs to the cookhouse for a bucket of hot coffee, of which, if the men were prompt in turning out, they obtained a mouthful before "Stables"; this was a grateful preparation to drowsy men about to tumble down ice-coated flights of iron steps into the raw, murky morning to their work. Each man was required to fold neatly his blankets, and with the short mattresses they had to be piled uniformly and neatly upon the folded iron cots in row; this duty was to be performed between the end of morning stables and breakfast.

KIT.

We were gradually accumulating a full kit, a bewildering amount of it. Various items had been issued to us from day to day—now a hold-all, then a forage cap, or a dozen things together, until the list included braces, tin of dubbin, hoof-pick, slippers, boots, knife, fork, and spoon, hair-brush, clothes-brush, razor, soap, flannel shirts, puttees, boot-laces, grooming kit, cholera belt, Tam-o'shanter (five kinds of headgear altogether), socks, etc., a canvas kit-bag quite full of things, some useless, some

superfluous, and nearly all better relegated to a common store than given to a man expecting to fight a mobile enemy. Frequent kit inspections began to be part of the routine; one would be ordered for a certain hour, when our possessions had to be laid out in uniform arrays on the cots, and each man had to fall in, at attention, at his outer right-hand corner, to await the visit of the inspecting officer. The cots so decked looked much like a lot of little "bargain counters."

The rations were plain and wholesome, the bread and tea especially were excellent. The bad quality of the meat was almost the only fault found by the men, sometimes it was villainous and tough. Irregularly, at midday dinner, the officer of the day formally visited us, to ask if there were any complaints to be made. Once the whole room agreed to complain of the bad meat, but upon complaint the officer turned to the sergeant, instead of investigating on his own account, and the sergeant upheld against his own section that the meat was good, and the protest was of no avail and had no effect in the future. After meals the mess orderly had to "scrap" the dishes and plates and wash them and the basins in hot water. We drank out of white china basins; we found them very handy substitutes for cups. Rations.

The routine went on from week to week, without much variation, until the fine music of the Guards' trumpeters became mere signals of hard duties, not to say a weariness. The memory of those calls! Shall we ever forget them? Those quick notes of sharp command, of long-drawn warning, of iterative insistence, the jolly rollicking scales, the mournful echoes of "last post" and "lights out" and the rising G's? I trow not, as the heavy tragedian might say. Bugle Calls.

We had our humours, our half-hours of fun, frolic, and song, smoking concerts, and irrepressible mischief—times when the spirit of destruction went about, when for the fun of keeping plates and basins flying from man to man around the room until half were broken, we were willing

to "chip in" to buy a new set. I now know it was a sort of safety valve. Napier had been made corporal in barracks—how he helped us in anything that promoted good fellowship and a kindly understanding! A leader in that as he was in all else that concerned his section—work or play, lending any one a helping hand, a young, healthy athlete of the best public school type, hopeful, joyous, cocksure that there was nothing very radically wrong with the world, "if you only buck up, you know!" especially if "they" would only buck up and get 34 out to the front! Again and again he took us to Prince's skating rink—over the way. He was a strong, graceful skater. Few of Section III. will forget him sailing around that great floor. At smoking concerts he would give us, in that downright, direct voice of his, "'Tis Tommy this and Tommy that," or some other of Kipling's ballads, and one could not fail to understand that there was something particularly hateful to him about "a plaster saint," such scorn would he throw into the words. God rest you, good comrade that you were!\*

There are, of course, several other faces and figures that stand out plainly and remarkable in the murk of insignificance that wraps most of the story of these days. Roller, with his antique, cameo-like profile, a set and earnest face, imbued with seriousness that was a prophetic recognition of the task before his Company. He was sergeant-major of the 34th, and had seen twenty years of service in the old Middlesex County Yeomanry. "I have been playing at soldiering for twenty years," I once overheard him remark, and only caught two little words further, but they were of that wonderful sort that summed up so much that was in the minds of many of us, "*And now!*"—that was it—with a sort of resolute reserve, it was "*And now!*" with almost all of us.

I think the situation was even more difficult for him than for the rest of us, for to the regular officer he was

\* Napier was mortally wounded at Senekal, December 27, 1900, and died the following day.



the focus of that chief offence the "amateur soldier," and he was well bullied accordingly. Besides, I fear he doubted the efficacy of so much of that play of which he spoke, now he was face to face with what promised to be reality. The memory of the jingling, showy picturesqueness of the trainings of many yesterdays may have already begun to mock him, for I had observed him, from a night stable guard's point of view, walking through the dim, with a look of perplexity. He was one of our best.

Then there was Agnew,\* in our Section—our room—the cot just across from me, reserved, silent, modest Agnew, with his high sense of duty, the least articulate of any of us—he seemed to have so little use for words—he simply pursued his way, the thing in hand, with a dogged, unquestioning force, the persistence of an instinct. He proved his mettle later.

We were a group of men of all sorts and conditions, none of us "red line 'eroes," yet. There were ever two sides to a shield. The orderly room, for instance, was a disgrace, a chaotic, drunken disgrace. There were those among us who viewed it with extreme disquietude, because we felt that if this was a specimen of what was possible under our Army system we had the best reasons to be dissatisfied with our prospect. I was called upon to do my Section Sergeant's writing and copying, so that I frequently had occasion to visit this room, where the records and attestation papers of the Company were then kept, and there can be no two honest ways of thinking about the matter. It would have been far better for the country and for us, if we had all been amateurs even if we had blundered a little at first.

As time went by, managers of theatres and music-halls sent us invitations, and those who chose to do so accepted them, and patriotic songs were bellowed at us *ad nauseam*. We were anxious to do something to deserve these oblations. What was more pleasant was the occasional dinner

\* Killed at Tweefontein on Christmas morning, 1901.

party, tendered to us by town friends, to which we were now and then allowed to go, on special pass.

There is little else of interest to chronicle of our barrack life. Riding and drilling continued for a week or two more; insurance agents and salesmen tackled us. The neighbouring restaurants and Harrod's and Gooch's Stores got to know us pretty familiarly. Lord Denman gave to each man of his Section a good blanket. Corporal Green gave each man of our Section a good waterproof sleeping bag, which, in my own case, became one of the most valued possessions on the campaign. There were two or three bad falls on parade in the park. We were kept busy; friends came to say goodbye; we knew we were only awaiting suitable ocean transport, and talks of the past and guesses of the future, after lights were out, and about the barrack-room fire, would continue far into the night, and there was little sound sleep for that and for expectancy.

At last, at the end of February, word came to us to get ready. Through lack of sufficient accommodation on the ship, only a portion of the horses could accompany us, and, much to my disappointment, my little mare was not among those chosen—it proved to be mistaken judgment on the part of those concerned in her rejection, she was one of the very best. How she and I met again is a story of Maitland Camp.



F. CECIL GRAY.



G. E. PRIDEAUX BRUNE.

*To face page 40.*



## CHAPTER III

### THE VOYAGE OUT

ON the night of February 27th we got no sleep. It <sup>1900.</sup> was the first night-march. There were to be many subsequent ones. Our barrack-room was crowded with friends, and one of the section very hospitably "set up" a good supper for the whole room. At 2.30 a.m., Ash Wednesday morning, February 28th, we set out, across London, for Maiden Lane Station, the L. & N. W. Railway Goods Station. Those whose horses had been selected led their mounts, and the remainder marched in "full marching order." There was not much of bravery, or of enthusiastic speeding of the parting guest, to mark the occasion. A very few friends, a shouting string of cab-drivers, loafers, and *femmes du pavé*—that was all. We entrained our horses and were ourselves crowded into musty-smelling compartments of third-class carriages. We started about 5.30, and later in the day, about 2.30 p.m., we arrived at Liverpool by the dockside (Canada Docks) with no other accident than one dead horse—kicked to death by a fellow-traveller. At the shipside we met other Companies, and with less confusion than might be expected, we embarked on the White Star s.s. *Cymric*—horses, kits, and all, some time before sunset. I had double duty to do, for I was "told off" to take Major Dalbiac's bags aboard, and to remain responsible for them, as well as my own kit, until all should be aboard.

We entrain at  
Liverpool.

After many little scenes of farewell, and many parting shouts from ship to dockside, and the hurry of

Down the  
Mersey.

## 42 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

belated messengers, we dropped down the Mersey and anchored for the night.

sail. We sailed early the following morning, Thursday, March 1st, and as we passed Holyhead, it was signalled to us that Ladysmith had been relieved. This good news, the pleasant weather, and the fact that there was plenty of work to do kept the men in very good spirits for this day of our leaving England's shores, and there was singing and whistling on every hand.

*Cymric.* The *Cymric* was a splendid 12,000-ton, new, clean, twin-screw steamship, as steady as a house. She was one of the largest cargo and passenger steamers afloat. She had been taken from the Liverpool-New York service for this transport work. She was such a fine, steady boat, that there was little excuse for sea-sickness—but in spite of all, a few men became quite ill, a lot felt squeamish and unfit for work, and for a few days this threw extra duties on those who were well.

Large as our good ship was we were pretty crowded. Our treatment, accommodation, and food were, we were told, a great improvement on that which those soldiers on transports a little earlier in the war had had to endure. The *Cymric* now had over 1,300 souls aboard, including the following companies: 1st and 2nd Wiltshire, 3rd Gloucestershire, 4th Glamorganshire, 20th Fife Light Horse, 33rd East Kent, 34th and 35th Middlesex, and 36th West Kent. There were two gun sections, twenty-three civil surgeons, sixteen other officers, and some details—altogether 94 officers and 1,106 non-commissioned officers and men and a crew of about 120 men. There were 450 horses.

We were at once assigned to special positions and duties in case of fire, and throughout the voyage fire-alarms were occasionally sounded in order that the men might be practised to occupy their positions without confusion or loss of time.

The officers were quite apart from us and occupied pleasant cabins on the upper decks. The men occupied

large mess-rooms between decks and amidship, and they were told off into messes of about sixteen men to each table. Two mess-orderlies were chosen for each table. There were separate messes for the sergeants.

We were soon organised for systematic work. Some had stable duties, some were swabbers, others chose to be mess-orderlies, there were assistant stewards, kitchen helpers, orderlies, guards, sentries, M.P.'s (Military Police), and pioneers. I was made one of the latter, and I found myself one of thirty under Sergeant Hunt of the East Kents, a man who had once held a lieutenant's commission in a cavalry regiment, and a very pleasant and able ganger he proved to be. He could be firm when he wished. My Section Sergeant claimed me for stable duty, and as many of the men were suffering from "Oh, my!" and I was sorry for them, I did not complain. Sergeant Hunt, however, soon learnt that I was given other than pioneer work, and became indignant, and, well knowing the ropes, talked so fluently to my Section Sergeant of the trouble any one might get into who presumed to interfere with his men that I was allowed to pursue my way as a free pioneer unmolested for the remainder of the voyage.

Our work was hard manual labour, mostly shoulder and truck work, and block-and-tackle hauling; but the hours were not long and squads had alternate days of duty. We had to get the stores, provisions, and drinks up from the hold and the cold-storage rooms, and take them to their several departments. From the mysterious and dim depths of the ship we hauled sacks of potatoes, barrels of flour, cases and barrels of bottled beer, soda-water and lemonade, and many different kinds of stores besides. As we neared the tropics, drink-hauling cut a principal figure in our work, and more than 4,000 bottles had to be dealt with in a day. All this drink was sold to the men at a fair profit, and I hardly see why the men should have been made to do the work of handling it for the steamship company. Empty bottles, barrels, and cases had to take



a return journey into store-rooms and holds. Our most disagreeable duty was the carrying of heavy pieces of frozen beef from the cold rooms to the kitchens. This meat was hard, unwieldy, greasy, and evil-smelling; shouldering it up and down the narrow gangways and ladders was neither pleasant nor easy work. We called this meat "embalmed beef"; it came from Chicago. The butchers gave us cloths to put over the head and shoulders, but before we reached our goals, what with dodging the horses in gangways of the stables and the pitching of the ship, our ill-balanced, weighty load would slip and shift out of place, and protruding fat would anoint one's neck and hair with a playful persistence. It was nasty work, but I daresay that the unfortunate swabbers had still more disagreeable duties to perform. Nor had the mess-orderlies an enviable time. Their work, like that of women, seemed never ended: hungry men bullied them, and, waiting in line at the kitchen door or at the under-stewards' mess-room gratings, not only tried the patience and tempers of our servitors, but, at times, their fighting qualities. No sooner had they washed up and had their tables inspected than it seemed time for them to be thinking of securing a place in the waiting lines for the next meal.

At night we slung our hammocks from the beams above the mess tables. Fortunately the ship was so even on her keel, and we had such fine weather, that it was possible to leave port-holes open at almost all hours. One of the first duties in the morning was the rolling of hammocks and blankets, for they had to be deposited in racks. I did not like the closer air of the mess-room, and I managed to sleep on deck, forward, in the open, the whole voyage.

Everything was done with regularity and punctuality and by bugle-call. If anything, we got too much bugle: for some call or another it was going every few minutes of the day. Some of the principal calls were rather fine; for reveille, for instance, fourteen trumpeters



combined, and there was no mistaking the hour to rise.

Stable duty consisted of undivided attention to the horse. The stalls had to be raked out; they were very narrow, just large enough to accommodate a single, standing horse. They were partitioned by movable boards—with one short front locking board, over which the prisoned horse stretched his head to catch the air of the gangway and to feed; he could not lie down. To exercise the poor beasts we led them out into the gangways, on which large, thick rope-mats were laid, and we walked them up and down in an endless string. We groomed them as best we could. There were appointed feeding - hours. Lieutenant Wallis, the battalion veterinary, very assiduously looked after the food and treatment of the horses, and he was extraordinarily successful, for only three horses succumbed on the voyage. It was an easier matter to get the horse from the stall than to get him in again. Some horses gave so much trouble that it required the united efforts of several strong men to back them into their stalls. Stables were called four times daily, so that every attention that could be was paid our mounts. They seemed so pleased to have a kindly notice taken of them, and in answer to a friendly nudge I would frequently stop and give their ears that gentle rubbing which seemed to be so grateful a sensation to them. A strong stable-guard remained in the stable gangways all night.

The natural incidents of ordinary sea voyages resemble each other very closely: some voyages are fair, some foul—ours was as fine a one as we could have prayed for. The particulars I have given will enable a reader to judge what our life, as an Imperial Yeomanry Company outward bound to the seat of war, was like. Neither the routine nor the incidents are matters of very great importance in this story, and its relation must not be further prolonged. The story, however, would not be complete without the outlines of this southward journey.

It is difficult to understand why many people become bored on the sea—the “monotony” of a voyage has never weighed disagreeably upon myself. To him who cares to read, old Ocean makes things easy, even to the constant turning of fresh pages, and interest should never flag in such a picture-book.

“Sun, wind, and cloud shall fail not from the face of it,  
Stinging, ringing spindrift, nor the fulmar flying free;”

Yet there were those here who were simply sea-weary and who longed to be on dry land again. Some found comfort or absorption in the gambling circles, a few read or slept out what little leisure they got. The minor excitements, which the new and enthusiastic voyager enters in the diary, attracted most of us to the rail—spouting whales, frisking porpoises, flying fish, the gaudy and adventurous nautilus, a passing sail or steamer, a bunch of wreckage, and so forth.

**The Canaries.**

On Sunday, March 4th, there was a church parade, and, in the absence of a chaplain, Captain Lindsay, the master of the *Cymric*, read the service. On March 6th, in the early morning, we called at Las Palmas in the Canaries, and a big mail, a multitude of “important” letters, was taken ashore. We were quickly surrounded by the bumboats of the place, and we were invited to buy many articles—chocolate, cigars, oranges, and bananas, all of very bad quality at exorbitant prices. The noisy bartering down the side of our great ship brought out many dialects of the British Isles, and one realised what a list of the different ways of speaking English might mean. An officer once called us a “damned suburban lot.” The epithet stuck rather than fitted; it had a sound of cleverness—the clever unkindliness of quip affected by the smart, at an expense of truth. Here Oxford and Yorkshire, Cockaigne and Cork, Aberdeen and Merthyr shouted against each other in accents of rich racial flavour. There is nothing of

ethnological significance about suburban English, in spite of Board Schools, or perhaps, because of them.

About noon of this day, upon our departure from Las Palmas, one of the members of the Fife Light Horse died of pneumonia. His taking-off was very sudden; apparently he had been ill only a few hours. He was seized in the morning, and buried at five o'clock, just before sundown. The service was read by Captain Lindsay; the ceremony was a most impressive one. All the Companies aboard paraded in various parts of the decks. Thirty-fourth Company was on the port side of the hospital door; we saw the body brought out by members of his Company; it was neatly sewed in canvas, and weighted. It was at once covered by the Union Jack. All the officers saluted, the men stood, silent, at attention. The air was warm and bright with sunshine, and the sea was very calm. A curious and rather moving incident attended the ceremony. The story was related after this fashion. The Fifies had desired to have their comrade buried to the sound of the pipes, but the Company found themselves without them. An Englishman had pipes and could play them. He led the procession, and, as it moved aft, a very plaintive, single, minor note, a sorrowful lamentation, arose. I had never guessed such a resource in the instrument; its simple expression of trouble was most impressive. The engines slowed down for a moment. The size of the ship and deck engines and rigging prevented our Company from viewing much of the ceremony from where we stood amidship; the burial took place aft.

Death aboard.

On the 8th we were off Cape Verde, and on the 14th we were passing east of Ascension. It was on this day that we did our first practice firing on board ship. Upon embarkation our rifles had been deposited in the Armoury. A few were now issued, and after some manual drill we were paraded, by sections, at the stern. This firing was of no practical help to us. We were ordered to load, present, and fire by number, and in little volleys of about half a dozen rifles at a time. The mark was a deal box

The chief arm again.



or case pitched overboard, and it was shot at when it had been left behind by the ship about 400 yards. There was no possibility for an individual of the firing squad to check his own aim. If the volley were not as one report there were ructions. Many bullets splashed wide of the mark. The officers seemed to take little interest in the main point—accuracy of shooting; what seemed of higher importance to them was the fit of a useless belt, or the set of a tunic, or the correct angle of the cock of a forage cap. Their constant assumption of indifference in points of vital importance acted as a pall on the enthusiasm of any individual. "I thought——" began a man one day. "Oh, you're not paid to think; your officers will do the thinking!" shouted the sergeant. We did very little shooting. I suppose the officers got tired, or, perhaps, the supply of free boxes gave out. An opportunity that could have been improved was neglected. Individual firing under an informed and careful sergeant would have done so much to familiarise men with their weapon and its uses as an accurate striker. A cheap paper bag target which could be inflated might be devised; by the use of such a mark much spare time on voyages could be made interesting and useful to the men. The worrying of men's lives with trifles should not be deemed a matter of such supreme importance as to occupy the most valuable part of learning-hours. The effect of our system may be seen by contrasting the attitudes of mind towards the rifle of the English soldier and the Boer.

Put a Mauser into the hands of the average British soldier—the soldier our system turns out, not the veteran of South African warfare—and there is a fair chance that he might open the breech and look down the barrel with a critical eye to see if a pull-through had been sent through it recently, not for accuracy's nor for the missile's sake, but because he has an inspection of rifles in mind. It is more than likely, however, that he would begin manual drill by number and wind up with an exhibition "present arms." "One! Two! Three!" and you will hear him

gabble, parrot-like, an incantation of this sort: "... 'olding it lightly at the full hex-tent of the right harm, fingers slantin' downwards, meetin' it smartly with the left 'and immediately be'ind the backside, thumb between stock and barrel pointin' towards the muzzle; at the same time place the 'ollow of the right fut against the left 'eel, both knees straight. The weight of the rifle to be supported by the left 'and!" "One! Two! Three!" This is about one-third of the longest manual order by numbers, and it is the Colonel's salute. To him the rifle is little more than an accoutrement, a part of his equipment, to be kept clean and fit for inspections, an ornament of manual drill. He knows little about it as an instrument for the accurate projection of dangerous missiles. From one point of view only will it fill him with the joy of battle; let his fancy but put a bayonet on it, or let him swing it about as a club, and in his eyes you will see a dangerous light indicating his soul's desire is for a hand-to-hand fight. Then he will descant upon its defects as a drill rifle.

Put a Lee-Enfield rifle into the hands of a Boer, and his first motion is to weigh it well, thereby ascertaining its balance. Then he will examine the sights, work the breech mechanism; he will be curious about the magazine and peer thoughtfully down the barrel, then he will aim, long and deliberately, like a hunter; he will test the sights over and over, and nuzzle the shoulder-piece against his cheek; after all that a far-away light will come into his eyes, and he will ask—for a cartridge. To him it is an instrument for killing, for the accomplishment, *from a distance* and from under cover, of certain harmful results and acts of violence. He keeps it clean, not because of his sense of cleanliness, but because he knows (who better?) that it will do a hunter's bidding more accurately in a clean and lubricated condition.

Work relaxed a little for a few degrees of latitude. Our full-blooded youths, I daresay, found the tropics hot enough, and all felt the lazy influence of the heat. The



horses showed the keenest pleasure at having their heads sponged with vinegar and water. They were carefully dieted. The pioneers had a busy time with heavy cases of bottles, for it was thirsty weather. We were once or twice reminded that pioneers' duties held elements of danger, for ropes would sometimes slip and turn and barrels fell with a crash of glass twenty or thirty feet below; luckily none of us was injured. Men got their hair close-cropped. The barber's chair was an inverted bucket by the wide stable galley. Dress became of the airiest fashion. The Captain ordered sails to be suspended for baths at reveille, and for those who preferred a douche there was a pump and hose.

Some athletic sports were got up, and for a few days these and obstacle races excited attention in spare time. Boxing and competitions at arms were the most popular events. Barrington, of our Section, distinguished himself as a light-weight boxer and satisfied all comers. Seligman, of the 35th Company, proved the best man at foils and singlestick. A Glamorgan man took the heavy-weight championship. Sergeant-Major Langley's gramophone supplied musical accompaniments, and "Rule Britannia" had never sounded so appropriate to us as now, sung by this big shipload of young patriots on the way to war.

In the obstacle race one man was stunned by a fall, and another almost electrocuted, for the electrical engineer had thoughtfully dropped the ends of live wires into the water-tank, which was the midway obstacle.

Inoculation  
experiments.

The doctors invited volunteers to try inoculation against enteric fever, and many men had the serum hypodermically injected in the region of the abdomen, and in consequence the decks became a big hospital, where men, feeling very ill and uncomfortable, lay about for several days. As to the efficacy of inoculation to prevent enteric, I cannot speak. One should hesitate to express decided opinions upon a matter so grave, and about which so little is known. On the campaign many men of our Company died of this awful disease, enteric,

and after many months of campaigning I came to this conclusion with myself—that the greatest dangers in camp lay in the water, and in food that had lain open to the visitation of flies and dust, especially to the former, for I think that there is no doubt that flies go from latrines to tents; myriads took refuge in the tents as the day waned and night fell. It is conceivable that such messengers might bring to meat and to opened tins of jam, condensed milk, and to dixies of lukewarm tea or coffee, the deadliest germs. It appeared to me that these germs at times lay dormant in the systems of apparently healthy men, and that to a man so poisoned a mere chill would prove fatal. Men undoubtedly kept in better health when constantly on the trek, and to me a long-standing camp and a hospital were a horror and a death-trap. I hardly ever drank water that had not been boiled, as tea or coffee. However thirsty I might be I rarely broke faith with myself; if I did I had always in mind the probable purity of the source. I took the precaution to subject my meat to great heat, and to cover opened rations. Such conditions with one's self are not impossible if one keeps in mind the penalty of disobedience.

Cut off from the world as we were we saw that England was going about her work and purpose with unshakable faith. There were other troopships than ours coming and going; we made out the *Umbria* homeward bound, and overtook and passed the *Ghoorka* with its khaki freight. A few more days came and went. On the 15th we passed east of St. Helena, and we knew ourselves, of a truth, to be in another hemisphere. At night new and strange constellations twinkled upon us. The Southern Cross was a subject of debate on watch. Men became less keen to be amused, and they prepared for the orders that might meet us at Cape Town. Nearly every one had letters to write.

At two o'clock in the morning on March 20th the cessation of engine-throbs, the rattling of an anchor-

Table Bay.

chain, and the difference in motion and sound, a gentle rise and fall without progress, a lipping lap of tiny waves woke us and made us aware of the fact that we were riding in Table Bay, or hard by it. Most of us were about by four o'clock.

Daylight disclosed an immense number of ocean vessels, mostly troopships and transport steamers, lying at anchor, scattered in the Bay, many waiting for dock or quay accommodation. It was unnecessary to inquire for Table Mountain, for it loomed up magnificently ahead of us. But the Cape of Good Hope, which we had half expected to see, we were told was far down the coast out of sight.

We got a chance to cheer the *Maine* and other hospital ships. Much time was lost awaiting either our turn at the landing-stages or orders not to hand, and we were yet to spend three days aboard ship. They were not idle days by any means, but had the necessity arisen the work done could have been crowded into one. Some few of the officers went ashore in a small boat, taking with them a large mail. The Captain, in handing the postage money to the boat, managed to drop it into the Bay and over six pounds went to the bottom. Six pounds of postage would account for a goodly number of letters.

#### Landing.

In the meanwhile kits, baggage, and accoutrements were brought up, overhauled, and sorted, and there was a scramble among the officers for their Company's complement of tents and camp outfits. I was guard for many weary hours over a great heap of tents, and I have a lively and grateful remembrance of Major Dalbiac sharply taking note of the time I had been on guard, for he had had occasion to pass and repass me several times during the day, and he himself went to inquire why a relief had not been sent. For the next few days there was a great deal of monotonous day and night guard. There was much hauling of cargo from the holds, and the rattle of busy deck engines and steam winches was continuous. A



few men were fortunate enough to get duties which took them on short visits to land. The Captain obtained a place by the quay-side at last, and, once we were moored, there was a hurrying hither and thither and heaps of kit and gear began to accumulate on the pier.

## CHAPTER IV

### MAITLAND

200.

VERY early in the morning of March 23rd we finally left the good ship *Cymric* for Maitland Camp. The way led through Cape Town up to the sandy stretches some four or five miles inland to Maitland, on the slopes of Table Mountain. It was a day of much discomfort, for a violent dust storm arose, filling eyes, nose, ears and mouth with grit. Various duties scattered us : some were leading horses, others were on orderly duties. I was one of a guard on a traction train, and the grime and smuts of the engine, conspiring with the clouds of dust, made us as black as negroes. By about noon we arrived at our destination. The fiercely driven sand became intolerable. Goggle vendors reaped a harvest, finding purchasers at almost any figures they chose to ask. My guard over the vans continued, while others moved about on the many duties connected with the settlement of a camp. They were allowed time for lunch and tea. I was not relieved until 6.45 p.m., when I had been eleven and a quarter hours on guard without food or intermission. I was given to understand that this was an innings of my Section Sergeant in return for the protection accorded to me, as a pioneer, by Sergeant Hunt.

The site of camp was on a layer of loose sandy soil, which in places was only a few inches deep. This stratum lay on a rocky bed. It did not lend a firm hold to pegs for lines or tents, which was a cause of constant trouble. As for the picketing lines, it was an incon-

ceivable anxiety to the stable guards, especially at night. In a week there was not a sound mallet in the lines and not a peg that did not resemble splinters for kindling purposes. Guards were kept busy running from peg to peg along the lines, and sometimes with a sudden rush a dozen startled horses would rip up a whole length of rope, heel-pegs and all, and get tangled into a plunging, kicking, rolling mass.\* Woe to the tent that stood in the line of stampede! At night the guards were required to shout every half-hour in rotation, from each line, from the top to the bottom of the camp, thus: "Number One, and all's well!" "Number Two, and all's well!" and so on. If any guard failed to carry on the shout, Number One had to begin the call again, until the chain had been completed, when there would be quiet for another half-hour. One night about midnight I was on "sentry-go" at one of the camp entrances, and for company I had been listening to the answering stable guards. The message had reached Number Eight, but Number Nine could not be got to reply—he was not answering just then. Three times the message rolled down, until all who were awake were wondering, painfully, what had happened to Number Nine. At a fourth and much-emphasised repetition there was a slight pause after Number Eight's shout, when, upon a startled camp came a prodigious shout, "NUMBER NI-NE, and all's blankety blank wrong!!" There was a sound of laughter, but comrades turned out to extricate the horses. I only know of one more stupid and impractical way of tethering half-trained horses than this "built-up rope" and heel-peg-and-rope system, and that is the custom of "linking." It worried horses off their feed, it cracked and chafed their heels, and often

\* I have a lively recollection of Sergeant Shells, one of the best-natured of men, getting up in his pyjamas one dark night to help me to wrestle with just such a situation. The horses had been terrified by their own blankets flapping in a strong breeze. It took us the best part of an hour to get the line settled down to quiet. The lantern would not stay alight, and pegs and mallets were most inadequate.

badly wrenched the muscles. In this camp it was particularly inappropriate.

We stayed at Maitland Camp for very nearly a month. We understood that we were here to undergo some sort of finishing training, to fit us for active service on the veldt. I fear we ourselves learnt little of practical use, but it was perhaps as well for us that we did not step from the life on board ship into active service. Even here, so near the real thing, our officers could not break away from their beloved fetich. We were still made to practise close-order\* battalion movements and parade form, the rear pack and saddle decorations increased—tradition and superstition must be kept alive! It is so difficult to abandon training! Now a netful of hay was added and a nosebag with a day's feed; the man was practically neglected, for no serviceable place was designated for his rations; † and although there was an empty mess-tin, a mess-tin will not hold a day's rations, nor is it a suitable receptacle for rations for a mounted man. When I saw my horse so dressed I could almost have cried aloud in protest of the absurdity of it;—but that would have been mutiny, and I really did wish to get to the front.

One of the earliest responsibilities of our camp was to furnish about twenty men for a guard for a bridge, which it was said had been threatened to be destroyed. This bridge was some few miles up the railway line. It was our first active service duty, and the departures of the guard were watched with keen interest. The men now first saw what it meant to turn out and travel with all the encumbrances of a fully-dressed saddle. It was with the greatest difficulty that the men were able to mount, for a saddle so top-heavy had a tendency to slip around

\* So close were some of our wheelings that some of the men's knees and legs became badly crushed, and at times centre horses would be almost lifted from their feet.

† The first haversacks issued to us were of such flimsy manufacture that they soon went to pieces upon being put to use.





MATLAND CAMP, NEAR CAPE TOWN.

*To face page 56.*



MATLAND CAMP, NEAR CAPE TOWN.



to the belly of the horse, and it was a poor chance that man had of passing inspection on parade who had not sub-section comrades ready to rush in on the first sign of an overbalancing. A good deal of kit was, not unfortunately, lost on these expeditions.

Major Dalbiac proved himself a keen horseman, and I think a duty in which he greatly delighted was going over the remounts, although he took no trouble to disguise that he had a poor opinion of the class of horse sent to us. On one of his kraal fatigues I chose a mount which he approved, but I only rode him a few days, owing to the very strange and, to me, very happy meeting with my little mare from Knightsbridge. She had come over with a big shipload, and one morning I found her tethered in our lines, just opposite my tent, where she had been tied by a stable guard who had found her loose in the lines during the night. She had suffered a good deal on the voyage out, but I took her to Major Dalbiac, and he seemed very pleased to grant me permission to exchange, after I had told him her claim upon me. She soon picked up with the care I bestowed upon her, and something of her old style and spirit returned.

Maitland Camp was a very large one, and was continually growing, as shipload on shipload of troops arrived. Our duties were numerous and hard, consisting of quarter, water, stable, night-stable, ammunition, headquarters, and other guards and "sentry-goes"; of battalion ration and forage fatigues, camp-cleaning fatigues, horse watering, stables, drills, parades, sham-reconnaissances and sham-battles. We were kept well at it from reveille to "lights out." The one relaxation and respite we had to look forward to was an occasional pass to Cape Town or the Observatory Club. This Club was a small but hospitable institution about half-way between Maitland and Cape Town, where, for a reasonable price, we could obtain a very good and clean supper. These club evenings are one of our few pleasant recollections of Maitland Camp, and the fun of waiting and



jockeying for a place at the table was a part of the entertainment. The way to the Club lay through the pleasant grounds of the Observatory, where many pretty semi-tropical plants were grown, and the walks and rickshaw rides in and about those paths were looked forward to with a sort of schoolboyish delight.

The Cape loyal colonist we found to be a good and wholesome brand of person—not at all the mere shouter our home pro-Boers would have him to be. Of the genuine article there were few young men about—of middle-aged men, of young families and old men there were, and they could nearly all talk of son or brother at the front, and their demeanour to us was of a kind of deferential gratitude for coming out to help their cause in South Africa. They went out of their way to help us. Their “Tommy’s Welcome to the Cape” on the quay was one of the most practical and kindly institutions of the sort that I came across. No soldier was allowed to land without his being made aware that tea, coffee, cakes, and a big bunch of grapes awaited him—truly it was a simple, good old fashion this, of coming with gifts in their hands to welcome their defenders. In the town, on pass, our chief quest was for a bath and a square meal. Sometimes we rode to town, a dozen or so at a time, on duty as Town Guard patrol, a very tiresome job, for we had to ride for hours at funeral pace, up and down and round about the principal streets, and we were never allowed either to dismount or to make purchases. I remember being on this duty and riding in double file for many hours with young Deane\* and finding his talk upon many topics very interesting; he was a young man of much intelligence and a good soldier.

Major Dalbiac was never so happy as when he had us in the open, tearing “hell for leather” over the scrub of the open country, often miles from camp. He was ever shouting for “Sergeant-Major Roller!” in his short, peculiar, petulant manner of utterance. He would do

\* Shot through the head and killed, on Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900.



this even if Roller were within a few feet of him, as if he were shouting to us by proxy. His contempt for the amateur soldier amounted to an eccentricity, and as that it was easily forgivable. He possessed that natural gift of intolerance that is characteristic of a certain type of English gentleman. No one could speak with more gentleness than he if he were so minded, and certainly few could outdo him in freeness and fluency of explanation when he was angered. But what was pardonable in a man of his remarkable personality became an insufferable insolence in officers of inferior calibre when they presumed to follow his cue.

I do not think it would be far from the truth to assert that from no point of view is it possible to measure with greater accuracy the distinctions between the different natures and values of men than from the top and the bottom. The consensus of the ranks is hardly less just and discriminating in its estimates than the General. When it is possible to observe the judgment of the ranks put to the test it is seldom found at fault. Alike, to their inferiors and superiors in rank, men unconsciously give, in little transactions, vivid characterisations of themselves. This was brought home to me at Maitland several times. One morning, in a very hot sun, I was "standing sentry," with rifle and fixed bayonet, over a big pile of 303 ammunition, when an elderly, quiet-looking officer, with a double row of ribbons on his tunic, walked by. I did not know him, nor was I at that time able to determine his rank, but I lost no time in bringing my rifle to the shoulder as he passed and as he returned a half an hour later I repeated the salute. He stepped up to me, and in a frank, friendly way, said, "I may be passing several times this morning; you need not trouble to salute me every time I go by." I said, "I was paying my respect to your honours, sir." He laughed indulgently, and I did not see him again. Presently a Lieutenant of a section of our Company passed by on horseback, and I made haste to give him the salute. He also returned, but

I did not note his coming among the many that were passing, and he turned in to where I stood and savagely shouted, "Why didn't you salute me? Stand upright, will you?" and mumbled threateningly of C.B.\* as he went on.

The Battalion forage and ration fatigues were sometimes very arduous. The long, single files of men under burdens of boxes of biscuits, jam, officers' wine cases, bags of salt or oats, and other stores sometimes reminded me of the lines of fish porters at Billingsgate. I do not wish it to be understood that I refer to the choice of language exclusively. The strained and bending shoulders of burdened men, the ant-like application and the clearing of accumulations by many hands was distinctly a glimpse of some busy centre of human toil. We learnt something about the law of gravitation in relation to eighty-pound sacks of oats and bales of hay that is not to be found in the text-books of philosophy. "Sixteen horses' corn!" is no joke, although we tried to make it one; it is of a too heavy nature for hearty humour.

One of our last duties in Maitland was to spend a morning in practising some fancy and intricate ways of folding horse blankets, as if blankets were napkins and we waiters. I have seen a Boer dismount, off-saddle, readjust blankets, saddle again, and remount while the prisoner convoy proceeded a few yards—not more than fifty yards, perhaps less. So also do these matters come easy to the Australian; but picture a Company upon a sudden call to saddle, in the dark of a windy morning, on active service, groping upon their knees working fantastic cavalry tricks with a blanket—while Rome was burning!

Apparently the Battalion had an appointment with some superior General, who was to have inspected us, mounted, before we entrained for the front, for we paraded in the scrub, and for two or three mornings

\* C.B. is short for "Confined to Barracks."

awaited his pleasure, but he never appeared, and we were greatly impressed with the greatness of his position. On one or two occasions the tension of expectation was severe as we reined in, in long lines, our restive mounts, with our rifle at the carry, but ever the young but unabashed Staff officer appeared with the great one's curt message. Our Major's handsome face at these moments was a study in expression. I imagine that only Kings can afford to come upon the stroke of the hour or keep faith with those below.

On April 12th we were paid in full to the end of March. We took it as a sign—for we were seeking after signs—that we were to move out of this Slough of Despond. On the 14th, in the morning, there was an ambitious attempt at Battalion drill and manoeuvres, with wild gallopings, when rifles at the advance wore great dabs of skin off one's hand, with dust and grit by way of salve. In the afternoon of the same day there was an inspection of 3,500 Imperial Yeomanry on foot, in a great square, and we were photographed, it was said, by order of Her Majesty the Queen. A few days later we had a sham battle over a large stretch of country, in which a great body of Imperial Yeomanry took part. Did the authorities about us at that time know that our work at the front was likely to be extended scouting, the outer guard duty of marching columns; that we were to be divided up in the field, and almost under the sole control of our Company officers? If they did, why so much field-day, parade, and review work? Wherein lies the utility of training men one way and using them in another?

## CHAPTER V

### TO THE FRONT

19.  
ril 19.

ON April 18th the 35th Company packed up, struck camp, and entrained for up-country. The next day—Thursday, 19th—our turn came, with the Battalion Staff. We ourselves were not badly off, but the thought of our horses in the little vans was not inspiriting. One of the chief horrors of war is the suffering of the poor dumb brutes. On the way up I spent all the time I could with my little mare; she would get excited when I climbed to the grated window and called her, as if she resented that I should treat her so—she could not understand why she should be jostled, thumped, and kicked so in such a black hole. At every stop I tried to smuggle food or drink to her. Next day she was ravenous, and I think I encouraged her to take care of herself, for horses are no better than men under such circumstances, and apt to trespass at such times on individual rights and neighbours' nosebags. When she heard me she would fiercely fight her way to the grated window.

ril 20.

ril 21.

Next day we were several thousand feet above sea-level, up on the African plateau. On April 21st we passed De Aar, very early in the morning; turned south-east to Naauwpoort Junction, then north again, past Colesberg, where we saw the first stern evidences of war in graves and dead horses.

We were turned out of the train rather unexpectedly after dark at Norval's Pont. We detrained our horses and bivouacked in much discomfort in the open, on an

old, unclean camping ground. We linked our horses, which remained hungry and restive all night. I was one of the stable guards that night.

Early in the morning we watered our horses in the Orange River, skirting the little town of Norval's Pont to the east. The destroyed piers of the railway bridge were another sign to us that we were approaching the front. So also was the temporary pontoon structure over the wide and muddy stream. Later in the day we saddled in full marching order, in our heaviest fashion, and crossed the pontoon bridge into the Orange Free State. We waited on the far bank for an hour or two, because a waggon had come to grief. Again and again we mounted and dismounted, in the hot, blazing sun and sand, until finally we got off, and settled down to a long forced march to Prior's Camp. We remained in the saddle over twelve hours. Hour after hour, in the dark, we went on marching over hill and plain and through steep and rocky defiles. Major Dalbiac was in command. For a long time we could not find the camp, and up and down we rode, whistling now to this light and then to that. After ten o'clock p.m. we came upon a picket, who directed us to our camp. Besides the tiresome labour and waiting of the morning we had now ridden over thirty miles, and men and horses were worn out.

April 22.  
Sunday.  
We cross the  
Orange River.

Next day we marched partly on foot, partly on horseback, from Prior's Camp to Springfontein, and camped on the hillside outside of the little town.

April 23.

We remained, for the sake of rest, in camp at Springfontein.

April 24.

We made a short march to a camp but seven miles distant. We started at 9 a.m. and led our horses the whole way. Our line of march was on a road alongside of the railway on the way to Bloemfontein, and on the march, as we proceeded in slightly extended formation, we frequently caught sight of passing trains hurrying stores and munitions to the front. The Major did not hide his anxiety to push forward, and ever forward, hoping to be

April 25.

in time for the Commander-in-Chief's advance from Bloemfontein on to Pretoria. This camp was "Kopje Kraal."

April 26.

We marched to Jagersfontein Road Camp.

April 27.

The day broke in very clear and lovely weather, and it remained warm all day. We made a late start towards Edenburg, and came in sight of the place early in the afternoon. We could view it northward, down a long, gentle declivity, all the afternoon, and we got our first idea of how exquisitely clear the South African atmosphere could be, and what a deceptive quality as to distances it held to us as strangers to it. For hours Edenburg seemed to remain at the same distance. I tramped almost the whole way, being very wishful to save my horse. Meikle of our Section was ill, and his horse was done up, so I let him ride my mare for a while.

A Lieutenant, who had little judgment in matters concerning either horses or men, spoke very savagely to him. He trusted entirely too much to regular sergeants' reports. All the men were very tired and out of sorts by the time we reached camp, where we found the stench of imperfectly covered carcasses, horses, and oxen, almost insupportable. We were evidently hot upon the track of war now. The officers tried to find a camping ground less exposed to this horrible smell, but failed to do so. Major Dalbiac himself seemed to think it an appropriate setting to the work we had in hand. He was a soldier first and a man afterwards.

April 28.

We were not sorry to get clear of this charnel ground and to be out in fresh open veldt again. After a long march we arrived at Bethany. I was on forage fatigue with several others. We had a long distance to carry the oats. I had an 80lb. sack and found it rather more than I could manage up the hill to camp. Kelsey very kindly helped me into the lines with it.

April 29.  
Sunday.

We remained all day at Bethany. At the railway station we saw trenches for the first time.



We marched from Bethany to Kaffir's River.

April 30.

I was glad of an opportunity of washing my clothes in the river to-day. I had no time to dry them, and had to put them on wet, merely wrung out. We marched to Ferreira's siding. We were still going along by the railway track. One of the frightful curses of this land must be the locusts—we have seen enough on these marches to be sure of that. They fly in areas—"flocks" or "swarms" or even "armies" are words of insufficient calibre to hit off the meaning—in areas of many square miles, and the flicker of their wings in the sun resembles, somewhat, the falling of large flakes of snow.

May 1.

We left Ferreira's Siding Camp and marched to the outskirts of Bloemfontein and halted for a few hours, and my Section deputed me to go to town to make some purchases of groceries for them. I got a Kaffir to carry out a big boxful, and we shared them in the Section. Colonel Mitford rejoined us here. I suppose he must have come up by train, for we saw nothing of him on the march. Some men had to be left here for detail work, and Kelsey, Roberts, Bunbury, and others were left here. This was such a hurried decision that I had no time to get my share of groceries from Kelsey, so that I benefited but little by my enterprising expedition. In the afternoon we marched through Bloemfontein, passing one or two military funerals, and we were told that deaths there were at the rate of twenty-five a day. We marched on until late into the night, camping at last at Bushman's Kop. We again had an awful time with restive, famished, *linked* horses.

May 2.  
Through  
Bloemfontein.

We arrived at Bloemfontein Waterworks from Bushman's Kop. Major Dalbiac was for marching on, but when we had got a few miles beyond the Waterworks Drift an order came to us from Colonel Mitford to halt. Whilst we were halted General French and his column, coming in from the direction in which we had been marching, passed us. It was a large cavalry and artillery column, the first large body of blooded veterans we had

May 3.

seen, fresh from the fighting-lines. An officer, mounted on a swiftly walking horse, intent upon an open map which was stretched out upon the pommel, was pointed out to us as General French. Our orders were to return at once to the Drift camp. Sergeant-Major Roller and other men in our Company met friends in this camp. Captain Dalgetty had ridden out with the order. The Major casually told him the men had had nothing to eat all day, and were simply starving. Upon hearing this Dalgetty exclaimed something, and hurriedly took all the food he had in his wallets and distributed it along the line. He handed me some biscuits, for which I warmly thanked him. We rode back to camp.

May 4.

From the Waterworks we escorted a big convoy along the road towards Thaba N'chu, to a camp, the name of which I did not obtain.

In the afternoon we heard heavy artillery fire, and saw the bursting of shells on kopjes to the north-east.

May 5.

From this camp we had a tiresome and slow march to a camp about two miles from Thaba N'chu.

May 6.  
Sunday.  
Thaba N'chu.

We heard the distant tolling of a church bell, from Thaba N'chu, in the morning. Later we were ordered into the town, where we first came into touch with General Rundle. His headquarters were established at a little house in the heart of town, where a little Union Jack was flying. Our Section (III.), under Mr. Brune, was given orders to join General Campbell's Brigade, which was about to force its way through the Pass, under Thaba N'chu Mountain. Our Section rode out of the town as advance guard. The Scots Guards and Grenadiers supported us in rear. We galloped along the plain at the foot of the mountain to the entrance of the defile; we were in extended order, and covered a good deal of ground. At the mouth of the Pass, Mr. Brune wishing to report that three or four Boers had been seen on the heights, sent me back with a written message to General Campbell, who was the general in command. I galloped back at good speed, and found the

Our First  
Action.





MAJOR-GENERAL BARRINGTON B. D. CAMPBELL, C.B., C.V.O.

Commanded the 16th Brigade, of the Eighth Division, in South Africa, 1900-1-2,  
and under whom the 34th Company I.Y. sometime served.

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General considerably in advance of the infantry, and attended only by an Aide. Sending his Aide off upon some errand, he told me I could take a despatch for him. He gave me two, one for Major Romilly and the other for Colonel Lloyd of the Grenadiers. I rode through an extended line of infantry and delivered the despatches and returned, as ordered, to report to the General. He asked me several questions: "Had I been in action before?" "Had a certain farm to the right been examined?" "What was my avocation?" "What bird was that in the high grass?" (it was a Secretary Bird), and several others, all of which I tried to answer succinctly. I was much impressed by the General's kindness of disposition. Presently he said, "This is all very creditable to you. You may now rejoin your Captain." I galloped on, and through the defile, passing a post of two men which Mr. Brune had established midway in the Pass. I cantered by the Section, on to the road on the far side of the Pass, where Mr. Brune had advanced with one or two scouts, and reported that I had duly delivered his message and why I had been delayed. On passing my Section I had paused to take off my jersey, for hard riding had made me very warm. The Sergeant reported me for this, in a disagreeable way, and I was admonished, as far as I could make out, for taking off my bandolier and belt in order to divest myself of my jersey. A few miles to the left front could be seen the dust rising from retreating Boer waggons. Our Section rode back to the town, but we met, in the Pass, some infantry on their way up the Pass.

Our Section, under Mr. Brune, made a reconnaissance for several miles in a north-easterly direction. We saw nothing of the enemy under arms. One or two Boer farmers and some Kaffirs at the kraals we passed sold us eggs and chicken. We returned in the afternoon and grazed our horses on the outskirts of the town. May 7.

Our Section had become the escort of General Rundle, and before light we were ordered to saddle May 8.

and repair to General Rundle's headquarters. Shortly after our arrival there the General appeared, and we galloped at a considerable pace out on a road in a southerly direction. A few miles out we met the Colonial Division, consisting of Prabant's Horse, the Cape Mounted Rifles, the Kaffrarian Rifles, Driscoll's Scouts, &c. They had just arrived from Wepener, where they had had a warm time. General Rundle and his Staff and Guard returned with the officers commanding the newly-arrived troops, at the head of the column. He halted in the town square, and presently the column marched past, every unit coming to the salute as it went by, the General returning the compliment. We were much interested; it was a rememberable incident to us, for we had heard a great deal of the gallant defence at Wepener, and the men looked like veterans and as if they had gone through some hard marches. The function was over at about ten o'clock a.m.

May 9. Our Section rested, and the horses were grazed, almost all day, in the outskirts of Thaba N'chu.

May 10. We left Thaba N'chu and scouted far in the valley beyond the Nek, and General Rundle established a camp on a hill at a place called Eden. We camped just under the hill.

May 11. Our Section made a long, all-day reconnaissance towards the front (N. by E.), under Mr. Brune.

May 12. We left Eden Camp at 2 p.m. to rejoin our Company with the troops under General Boyes, north of Egypt Camp, as it had been decided that our Section was no longer to play the part of Guard to General Rundle.

May 13.  
Sunday. We marched six miles to the main camp. We remained on Cossack Post from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on a kopje about a mile and a-half from camp. Major Dalbiac, it appeared, had taken command, temporarily, of the three other Companies, which were encamped at Leeuwfontein. Captain Brune joins General Boyes' Staff.

May 14. We struck camp at 2.30 a.m., and marched until day-break. We joined General Rundle at a camp near



Brand's Drift, and stayed there for the rest of the day. I was one of a Cossack Post on a high kopje. As it was an important position ; an additional post was sent up from the Colonial lines, and I met some of the Kaffrarian Rifles there and heard many interesting stories of the fighting at Wepener. Stewart Bowden and Gunston, of D Company K.R., gave me a most interesting collection of bullets from Boer cartridges, including soft-nose, dum-dum, brass-nosed-lead-elephant, and other merciful missiles of a similar sort.

Our Section became left advance guard, Captain Walsh May 15. commanding. We scouted in a northerly direction, and came upon a nek with great kopjes on either hand. Walsh ordered Webster, Weedon, jun., and me to gallop out, as outer left scouts. Weedon and I climbed the great berg to the left of the nek, calling at a very isolated farm in a little hoek. Four or five women sat closely about the front door, as if to prevent our entrance. It was a new situation to me, and we decided not to enter the house to search it. We bought a glass of milk as an excuse to wait awhile, and then we passed round to the back of the house, but as all the windows were covered we saw nothing. The berg rose almost abruptly behind the house, and in climbing up the very steep and rugged path I frequently paused to watch ; all was quiet in the house below, although there was a general movement among the women immediately we left. The hill was so big that we had lost touch with the column, and Weedon passed over, taking a short cut towards the column, which was passing on through the nek. I rode alone to the summit, which was from 500 to 800 feet above the road, and got a magnificent view for many miles around. I could see the whole column trailing along the road below. I saw many good ponies and sheep on the tableland of the summit, and in descending I met some Kaffirs with a "bunch" of mares, which they were driving to a kraal because of the approach of troops. At a farm below I met two or three officers and their servants

foraging. I asked for permission to make purchases, which was only grudgingly granted. I bought four pounds of good fresh butter, which I carried into camp and shared with my sub-section.

Napier did a plucky thing to-day. He was scouting with Jacoby when he came across some armed Boers in a donga. He sent Jacoby back to report, and stood his ground himself, well within range of their rifles. The fact of his doing this made them think that he was supported, for one of them came out with a white flag. Napier told him that if they would lay down their arms all would be well. This they did, seven in all, and were much surprised to find Napier alone with his revolver cocked. He marched them in triumph back to camp.\*

May 16.

I was one of a Cossack Post—Jacoby and Blyth being the others—on one of two little, twin, isolated kops near a deep drift, by a farm. Napier placed us, but there was no non-com. in charge. We elected Blyth as corporal, *pro tem.*, but we all took our two hours' turn, twice during the night. We slept among the boulders on the kop side. From the neighbouring farm, which was deserted, we got an abundance of oat forage, so that our horses fared well and were quiet and contented all night. We were relieved at sunrise by the new post, and returning to camp we were met by Sergeant T., who accused us of letting two Boers through the lines into camp, men who had come in to surrender from quite another direction. We found that there was to be a saddlery inspection, and Mr. Kennard came and directed us how to expose our saddlery. Everything had to be separated—straps,

\* In a letter home Napier himself described this incident as follows:—

"The other day I was scouting about four miles ahead of the column (I had just sent in a man with a message) when a party of mounted Boers came out of a donga about three-quarters of a mile ahead. I was all alone in rather broken country and a horse very beat. I sat tight and waited. One of them soon rode out from the rest and hoisted a white flag. I was very suspicious, and made him come up alone. He was armed and his pony done up, so I got the rest up (7 men and 10 ponies) and marched them into camp."

wallets, stirrup-irons, bits, &c., and the saddles to be stood at the back with the folded blanket. Mr. Kennard had hardly turned away when the Sergeant came up shouting that the things were all laid out wrongly. It was his custom to shout when an officer was about. I told him he had better leave men alone who had been on guard all the night without a non-com., and not worry the lives out of men with trifles. He said I told him to go to the devil. I may have done so, but I had no recollection of doing so. The sentiment was so in consonance with my thought that it was not worth while denying it. I was at once arrested, and Captain Walsh reprimanded me and ordered for me "all the fatigues possible." My life, for the next few days, was made a burden to me. The Sergeant could not find fatigues enough to suit him, he invented them. One was to pick up the feathers of a duck that had been plucked near the lines. Unfortunately we had not the implements, in the use of which we had been so efficiently drilled at Knightsbridge. To pick up a duck's feathers from the grass, one by one, required patience. It can be done—if you have time. After watering our horses we struck camp about noon and the column marched about eight miles. 34th Company were advance scouts.

## CHAPTER VI

### BESTER'S FLATS

CO.  
lay 17.

A PART of our Section, under Prideaux Brune, rode out, very early in the morning, to a suspected Boer farm. As we rode up a long hill over the veldt to the constant cry of "'Ware hole!" "'Ware wire!" Groome's horse got a heavy fall. Groome sprained his wrist very badly. It was a fine farmhouse, among orange and other fruit trees. There was an old patriarchal Boer of the Kruger type, and a very fat, burly son, and a lot of women. We obtained our first oranges here—the trees were laden. We bought a few supplies—milk, bread, chicken, and oranges. We expected to find arms, but only got some old weapons and a desk full of correspondence. We returned to camp, which was on the move, and went on with the column to Bester's Flats and camped. There Agnew and I got orders to join Major Wood (of General Rundle's Staff). We rode out with Major Wood, a guide, and a small guard. Starting about sundown our little party wandered about a good deal for hours—the guide was not quite sure of his roads. We called at an old farmhouse, surrounded by big gum-trees, and tried to get information from a Boer woman. She could give us very little. She said she did not know any places called Clocolan, Mequatling, &c. I stood guard, at shoulder arms, during the examination of the woman. Major Wood got out a map and examined it in the room by a dim candle-light. He came out and chided the guide, and said he had lost his way. The guide said, no—he knew his directions. The



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MAJOR-GENERAL SIR H. McL. LESLIE RUNDLE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O.

Commanded the Eighth Division in South Africa, 1900-1-2.  
Commanding South-Eastern District,

*To face page 71.*

Major said he would give him another chance. We went on our way, and, by and by, in a dark defile, met an old negro with a pack mule. He told us there was an English commando "over there." We finally rode up to a picket and came to General Rundle's camp at about 9.30 p.m. Agnew and I had ridden over forty miles that day and were very hungry and tired. With infinite labour I got some coffee half boiled, and, after drinking this, we turned in under the shadow of a waggon.

In the morning Agnew and I awaited orders to return, May 12. but they did not come, and presently we were ordered to fall in with General Rundle's escort. We were a party, altogether, of twenty-five or thirty. We knew, of course, nothing of the General's purpose. It seemed to be a sort of reconnoitring party. In an hour or so, from a hill we had come out upon, we spied dust rising from a road trending to the left front in the broad plain below. General Rundle jumped quickly from his horse and eagerly examined the road with field-glasses, then he ordered Major Wood and Captain Webber to pursue with the escort. We scrambled headlong down the hill. Agnew and I being, more or less, "on our own," took the lead with the two officers. Both of us had fairly good horses. We needed such, for there followed a very hard gallop, with no sparing of horses. Many of the escort fell out—the pace was too hot. As we led, neck and neck, I said I wanted to shout, "Go it, Middlesex!" "So do I," said Agnew. I dismounted to open barbed-wire gates, and on we went. We overtook no one, but making a slight turn in the road about four miles from where we had left General Rundle, we came in view of a country store and a very handsome farmhouse and grounds. We instantly rode into the yard and posted men at one or two points. An old German gentleman came out and asked us into the store. There was a Welsh assistant in the store, who gave us something to eat—bread and jam—and some whiskey and soda to drink. We demanded arms, and a young German

brought out two guns, one an old and worthless rifle and the other a brand new Mauser carbine. They also brought out fifty rounds of ammunition in new and unbroken packages. I buckled the Mauser to my saddle, and when we returned in the afternoon I brought it and the ammunition to camp, which had been pitched where we had left the General in the morning. The store was on the slope at the bottom of the hill, and from the yard we swept the wide horizon with our telescopes. There was much debate if a Kaffir kraal, at a great distance, were or were not a convoy. The officers rode back to the General to report. They returned, and the store was locked, the keys taken, and a guard set. No one searched or entered the house, which stood in a garden among laden orange-trees. I walked around on the outside, but found nothing suspicious, although I suspected greatly. The old man was only just civil, but he was non-committal. The young men were over-civil, if anything. The officer ordered one of the store Cape carts out, and had it loaded with supplies for sale in camp, mostly for the officers. I was mounted-guard over the Cape cart going back to camp. The escort, with Agnew, rode on in front. This house and store should have been thoroughly searched. I had found exploded Mauser cartridges about the storeyard, but the packages were *unbroken*. The carbine was *quite* new.\* I should have liked to have been permitted to keep that carbine; it was a beautiful weapon. I handed it in to a Sergeant of the Staff. The rest of Rundle's troops had come up and had camped, and headquarters had been established at a pleasantly situated farm. Close by the farmhouse was an extensive orangery, and Agnew and I filled our nosebags with oranges to take back to Bester's Flats. We had barely got some eggs boiled when we were ordered to report at once to Headquarters. General Rundle himself came out

\* This over-trustfulness on our part, this lack of vigilance which I often noted at this stage of the campaign, in my opinion, greatly prolonged the war and necessitated our doing, later, much work over again.

of his tent to see us depart. We rode back with a guide, and on the way I lost my bag of oranges. We got into camp rather late, and Agnew took the despatches into General Boyes' Headquarters while I waited outside in the dark, holding his mount.

In the morning I was on wood fatigue under Corporal May 19. Grumley. We took a fence down, on the lower side of one of Schimper's fields. In the afternoon I was told off with Banks and Wilshin for patrol duty around the low hills and low ridges about Bester's Flats. We called at three farms and bought bread, eggs, butter, and Boer tobacco. We saw no armed Boers, and we returned to camp after sundown.

I was called at 4.30 to form one of a guard of four for a May 20.  
Sunday. convoy to Gibson's Farm, six miles in the direction of General Rundle's headquarters. As we returned we saw some ostriches, some buck, and some painted stones which the Boers had evidently used for rifle butts. In camp, we found a mail had come up. I got two letters.

A patrol of seven men, under Sergeant Nicoll, of which May 21. I was one, was ordered out early to scout the long ridges to the westward and north-westward of camp. We called at four or five farms and made some purchases, but saw nothing of the enemy under arms. We rode a considerable distance during the day, and the horses became very weary. Nicoll's little horse actually lay down in the path as we came in towards camp, refusing to carry him any further. We arrived in camp after dark, and I found that I was told off for night-guard and that an invitation to late dinner was awaiting me from Napier's sub-section. It was a most pleasant party. We partook of baked goose, bread and jam, and coffee.

We heard this morning that Mafeking \* had been May 22. relieved, that Baden-Powell was safe. There was much rejoicing, for we had been hearing for many weeks something much to the contrary. And now, the men say, with Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking relieved, and

\* Mafeking was relieved May 17, 1900.



Majuba day avenged, "the Boers have not much to brag about."

Bester's Flats camp, covering about fifty acres, was situated in a rather low-lying level of the veldt, at the foot of a big berg or kopje; it was bounded on the opposite or north-west side by a small stream, running at the bottom of a rather deep donga. On a sheltered slope of the kopje, just above camp, was the house of Mr. Schimpers who was said to be a wealthy man connected with Johannesburg mining. He had, here, a handsome country house, and the gardens, which were well watered, contained many planted trees—Australian gums, poplars, willows, and an extensive orangery. We bought a lot of oranges of the Kaffir servants at one shilling per horse nosebag. I heard that Mr. Schimpers was greatly interested in race-horse breeding. The farm consisted of about four thousand acres of land, enclosed by a barbed wire fence with well split stone fence-posts. There were many cattle, horses, sheep, and ostriches, but I never got an opportunity of seeing the more finely bred horse, of which we had heard.\*

#### "VISIT TO A STUD FARM IN THE ORANGE RIVER STATE.

(BY THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER, W. ALLISON.)

It seems strange indeed that amid all the war and trouble it should be possible to visit a stud farm in the enemy's country, but the following extracts from a letter from T. Shipley, jun., to his father show that the British thoroughbred still interests both sides alike, and does much to promote friendship and good feeling.

"BESTER'S FLATS, STUD FARM, NEAR WINBERG,

May 23, 1900.

"DEAR FATHER,—A few lines that will possibly interest you and Mr. Allison as much as war news. I had an invitation to look round the stud

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\* Mr. W. Allison, whose nephew (T. A. Scott) lost his life in our Company, sends me, amongst other papers, the following extracts from *The Sportsman* of June 27, 1900. One cannot help agreeing with Mr. Allison that they throw a most interesting sidelight on our campaigning. They also illustrate how very different points of view may be. The writer, a member of the 34th, was an expert in horselflesh, and wrote from the point of view of a groom on the Headquarter's Staff.







MAJOR-GENERAL J. E. BOYES, C.B.

Commanded the 17th Brigade, of the Eighth Division, in South Africa, 1900-1,  
and under whom the 34th Company I.Y. served during the greater  
part of its South African Campaigning.

*From the Painting in oils by Miss Marjorie Evans, R.S.W.*

*To face page 77*

May 22.

General Boyes established his headquarters by the lower fence of the homestead. The plain was bounded by long, low hills or ridges towards the direction of Winburg, with, here and there, towards the south and east, great towering bergs. A telegraph line runs through the property, which I concluded from the direction, must be the Ladybrand-Winburg line. The weather we experienced in this camp was of a most perfect kind—eternal blue sky and heat during the day, and clear starlit nights, which were rapidly becoming extremely cool.

The men were learning to be much more self-reliant, beginning to learn many useful shifts. This morning there was no coffee for them. There were two excuses offered to account for its absence. (1) A Brigade Major had refused to allow the water fatigue to draw water after tea, which meant after dark, at Schimpers's water tap—the dixies had been engaged during the tea-hour—water had to be drawn after light in the morning, and as it had to be carried a long way, our coffee was not "up" until 9.30 a.m. (2) The shortage of fuel. Reveille was at 6 a.m., and patrols went out, so that the belated coffee was of no use to most of us.

of Mr. Schimpers. I don't know whether Mr. Allison knows him, but Mr. Abe Bailey and Mr. Stayt have had some of their horses standing there before the war started.

"All the stock look remarkably well, two yearlings especially, fine ones by Versailles, a horse that used to belong to the Prince of Wales. He has two stallions here now: Whitcraft, a fine-looking brown horse—never able to train him here. There are a dozen fine foals running in the yards by him. I don't remember his name at all.

"Also Middy, an older horse (chestnut). He won the Port Elizabeth Stakes, 12st. 11lb.; that is what breaks the horses down here—weight and short distances. Most of the other horses he has sent to Mr. Abe Bailey's stud, and the mares look very well, considering they only run the veldt. He has Dorothy Fox, Irish Lass, Mountain Warbler, Suntide, Thornaby, Nightingale, Monaschisne, and Crenesh.

"Mr. Schimpers says breeding was a very profitable game before the war, and thinks it will improve after it is all over. He has a fine place, and about 5,000 acres of land—good grazing land. His buildings are built from rock, and will last for ever, and I should say it will be one of the prettiest little places in the state. Old Mr. Schimpers 'trekked' here in 1879,

There was an abundance of wood about the farmstead, but we had been forbidden to touch it. The veldt and hills were absolutely treeless. The scarcity of firewood, within sight of plenty, was a source of much discontent among the men. It was teaching them to collect and to burden themselves with fuel of all sorts whenever the chance offered. Dung, fence-posts, dead fruit trees, all was grist. They were beginning to kindle their own "individual" fires, and to do many services for themselves.

To-day, I saw Farrier-Sergeant Meek busily roasting a leg of mutton and frying chupatties for his sub-section. I had a long gossip with him about his North-west Frontier campaigning. In the course of conversation he told me that he was wearing about his neck the caul of one of his children, which his wife had told him would bring him good luck!

Biscuits were exhausted for the present, and flour was served out, in rations, instead. We only managed to cook this with great difficulty, in the form of tough, doughy chupatties, for we were without the proper grease which would have rendered them more palatable, and the fuel we had was not suitable for such work. Indeed, we should have fared very badly, if we had been unable to

after the Basuto war, without a halfpenny in his pocket, and he is very proud of his success.

"This war has made a good deal of difference to him. His four sons were commandeered for the war, but got their passes the other day, and if the war ends very soon, it is possible that Mr. Schimpers will visit England and visit Cobham. He was at Mr. Stayt's place some time ago, and saw the two-year-old we sold him from Cobham, and says he is a very fine-looking colt, and should do something. Collar, he says, is the finest-looking horse in South Africa, and Cuming is another fine horse in his opinion, and he knows a bit.

"We had a football match yesterday, quite an Oval day, more so with the presence of the ladies from the house in gala dress—quite a treat to see a respectably dressed white lady again. Hope all the stock are doing well—better than our gees are doing here. I hope this war will soon be over.

"I venture to think the above is as interesting a sidelight on the war as we have yet read."



make purchases from the neighbouring Boer farms. We bought at very high prices, but we valued the opportunity, even if it were costly. We purchased, when we could, milk, butter, eggs (which are not easy to carry on horse-back) and brown bread, which was of good quality. Of course we could not keep ourselves constantly supplied with these luxuries, but our regulation fare was wonderfully helped out by these purchases. Game was not scarce here, but we were not allowed to shoot it. I had observed plenty of buck, deer, guinea-fowl, koorhaan, &c. The men would talk of the question of food and rations, in sepulchral tones and with a tragical air that would have been amusing under less serious circumstances.

We were getting very weary of Bester's Flats. It was beginning to be unhealthy, for the ground was becoming filthy. Captain Walsh was taken ill to-day, and had to go into hospital—for Winburg. The Company was getting very short of officers. Major Dalbiac was away with Captain Firman and the 35th Company, on a Winburg road. Mr. Brune had been appointed galloper on General Boyes' Staff. Mr. Kennard alone remained to us, for Lord Denman unfortunately had been left very ill at Bloemfontein.

Our horses were plainly showing the effects of constant and hard service and bad food. My little mare and Tomlin's big horse were holding out the best of all. They were all very thin, for lack of sufficient and regular food. Some men were being supplied with small native ponies, in the place of their used-up nags. I had ridden no other than my mare, and she was doing much duty with continual faithfulness and good spirit. By night and by day, when not in use, the horses were linked; it was a pernicious manner of treating them. Picketing gear had gradually worn out and had disappeared. By day, we were constantly called upon to furnish Orderlies, Cossack Posts, Patrols, Pickets, &c. The country was, of course, unfamiliar to us, and at times we were confronted with difficult problems. A message one day

came from Headquarters for an orderly to take despatches to a place called "Makelsi." Sergeant-Major Roller came to me and said, "I can obtain no accurate information as to just where this place is. All I know is that you will have to travel in a south-easterly direction and perhaps pass through a place called Belvedere." I was glad to have the chance of a job of this sort, but I explained that upon such meagre particulars I could only fail, for these names meant nothing to me. There was no way of identifying these names in relation to the veldt, were they farms, drifts, wayside stores or kopjes. Roller said, "I know this perfectly well, Corner, and unless further particulars can be obtained you cannot go." Some different plan was adopted, for no one from our lines went out that afternoon to "Makelsi." Even the distance was not known. Only Belvedere was marked on Roller's map, and that might be any distance from five to fifteen miles from Bester's Flats.

Another afternoon, Major Dalbiac, who had a post to establish, called for a guide, for a certain road towards Winburg, not the main road, but another. Davern and I were chosen. Davern had been a sailor, he was also an old South African settler. He was a good and reliable man as to roads and directions. Davern protested, in this case, that we could not pretend to be guides to roads we did not know, and on which we had never travelled. The Major saw the justice of this, and said that he would go to the General for more particulars, and would we see if any other man of the 34th Company had been on the road in question. We found that Trooper Phillips had ridden on that road, and the Major, returning, after a short conversation, made an engagement with Phillips to meet him, on the Winburg Road, next morning. In the meantime, he said, he was going to Winburg and return. We never learnt if he really went to Winburg and back that night. If he did, he must have ridden all night, at a hard pace. It was then late in the afternoon, and he met Phillips about 10 o'clock a.m. the next morning.





Rall. Cholmeley. Ouvry. —? Shells. Thornton.  
(Killed.)  
AN ORDER.

To face page 80.



CAMP UNDER SENEKAL KOPJE, MAY, 1900.



This interview is deeply impressed on my memory. It was the last conversation I ever had with the Major. He looked depressed, disheartened, and sad, and he was in one of his gentlest moods. Only once more did I ever speak to him, face to face, and then he gave me an order which was probably the means of saving me either much unhappiness, as a prisoner, or my life. The post required was apparently established by the 35th Company under Captain Firman.

The soil of the neighbourhood seemed to be more or less the *débris* of iron stone. On roads, or where water ran or flooded, the tiny scattered brown iron nodules reminded one of the minute pebbles of Ryde Beach. So, in a reverie, on the tramp, the march, in the blazing blue



SOUTH AFRICAN OX YOKE.

sunshine and khaki veldt, upon so slight a suggestion, would a vision of tumbling waves flash across the senses.

The force in camp consisted of the 17th Brigade. There were six guns of the 77th Battery; Battalions of the Manchester, Kent, and Staffords Infantry; the Middlesex and W. Kent Imperial Yeomanry; Army Service Corps; Ammunition Column; Hospitals; Red Cross Ambulance; convoy waggons; oxen, mules, and cattle. Our waggons were mostly the long four-wheeled, flat-bodied ones of the country, drawn by oxen, generally sixteen, *i.e.*, eight yoke mates inspanned to the waggon. Some were English army waggons, drawn by mules. There were large numbers of Cape carts. The oxen are yoked by horn and shoulder (or nape of the neck) by long, straight, wooden beam-like yokes, with notched yoke pins, quite different to the arched ox yokes of Mexico.

The daily slaughtering of animals is rather uncanny. Mostly, sheep are killed; twenty were killed to-day. Distended entrails lie rolling about, warm, in the sun, in

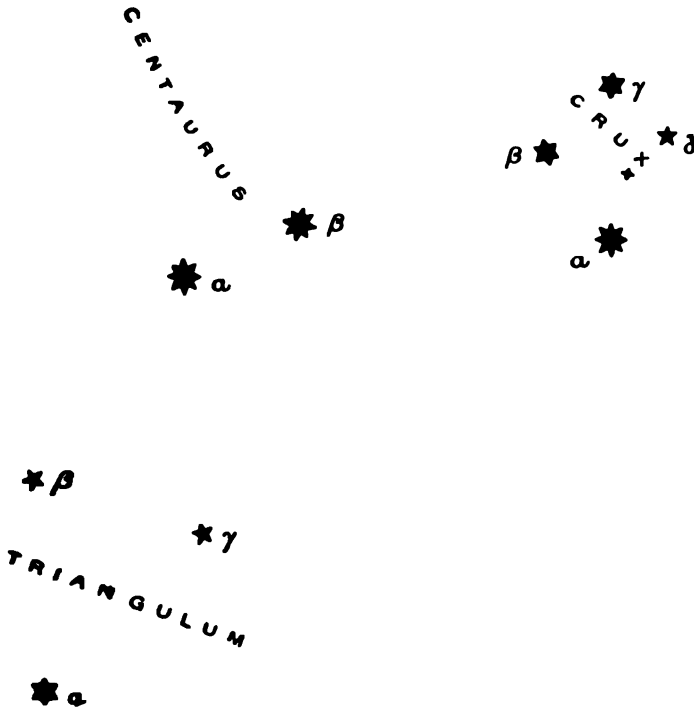
the precincts of camp, and Kaffirs and vultures eye the offal in competition. A couple of days ago a water fatigue at Schimpers's was nearly shot by the butcher, who forgot that Lee-Enfield bullets travel so far after doing work near at hand. I was one of that fatigue party, and two or three bullets hummed about us, all too near us to be pleasant. A man had already been wounded in this manner at another camp. We went down and expostulated with the butcher.

By day the General's Headquarters were marked by a red flag, and by night a coloured lamp was kept burning.

Some of the men devised shelters made with blankets and rifles. I much preferred the open for myself. Camp duties fell very heavily upon us at Bester's Flats.

At Bester's Flats I first noted carefully the movements of the Southern Cross about the South Pole, and got to see that it was easy to tell the time approximately by its circling. Frequent night guards caused me to become, more or less, a star-gazer. There are other constellations about the South Pole which form, fairly accurately, crosses.

I noted many interesting birds of the neighbourhood. koorhaan, guinea-fowl, bustard, secretary, aasvogel, eagle, hawk, plover, ostrich, shrike (which the Boers call "Jack the hangman," in English, because, like our "Butcher Bird," it impales mice and beetles on thorns and the barbs of barbed wire), and many other types that were unfamiliar to me.



SOUTH  POLE

$\alpha$  and  $\beta$  Centaurus, two very brilliant stars, are commonly called "The Pointers," as they point to the cross.

## CHAPTER VII

### ON TO SENEKAL

300.  
May 22.

**A**FTER dark, on May 22nd, orders came to us to pack up and leave Bester's Flats Camp. Mr. Kennard was now in command of our Company. On account of our having been on this road before, Faber and I were ordered to ride in advance as guides as far as Gibson's Farm. A short way out Kennard insisted that the road trended to the left along the veldt in the valley, and although we protested that it was the right-hand road we should take, he took the left. I rode to the right and found the proper road and then galloped back to where I had left them, but they had already turned back to the right further on, and as I galloped forward to rejoin them I blundered in the dark full tilt against a barbed wire fence. My mare fell headlong, and I with her, and by the time we had pulled ourselves together, our Company was well ahead. I was much shaken, and owing to my fall, and the intense darkness, had missed my direction. I called up a Kaffir at a farm kraal, who gave me my direction. I came into Gibson's Farm Camp, which was a post held by the West Kent I.Y. and others, soon after my Company had passed through. The sentry pointed out the road my Company had taken, but it was so dark that I was unable to follow it. Ascending a high kopje and hearing nothing of the sound of marching horses, I decided to bivouac in the open for the night. My mare was very restless, I tethered her to my bayonet driven into very stony ground, and as it was insecure I was also



obliged to tie the rein to my wrist, so that I got little sleep.

As soon as the dawn began to show itself I rose from my bivouac of the night on the kopje-top, saddled, and rode back to Gibson's Farm, once more to take my direction by the light of day. I had wandered about four miles from the farm, but was able to ride straight in without hesitation. The little camp was busily preparing their breakfast, and I found there, just arrived from Bester's Flats, a little party of my own Section who had been left behind for orderly duty—for General Boyes's Brigade was following on later—but who had received an order at three o'clock in the morning, to rejoin our Company without delay, because they would not be required. As I had had no breakfast I thought it a good opportunity to get it, so prepared my modest meal. Besides, I discovered that the little squad of my own Section were proceeding immediately they had breakfasted. With justifiable triumph Webster produced thirteen eggs, but some one rashly said that thirteen was an unlucky number. Blyth laughed and said that he would soon show that it was unlucky for the eggs, or something of that sort, and turning to business boiled them in a mess-tin. The consternation can better be imagined than described when, as they were broken one after the other, *every one* of them proved to be addled! After breakfast we all rode on together and reached Mexico Camp, where we found our Company. This I recognised to be the camp to which Agnew and I had returned after that hard pursuit to the German's store on May 18th. May 23.

In the evening Sergeant-Major Roller ordered me to ride up to Headquarters at the farm to copy the Brigade orders. Orders were not issued, and I had a long and tiresome wait without tea. At last a Staff cook took pity on me and gave me such a big, luscious chupatti as I had never tasted before and a hot cup of tea. I was very grateful to the good comrade, for I was grievously a-hungred.

I saw Colonel Mitford here for the first time since the Water Works Camp. He seemed annoyed about something or another and spoke sharply to me, although I explained that I was there upon an order.

At last orders came; they wound up with one for three cheers for Her Majesty, on the morrow, and a double issue of rum. Neither cheers were given nor rum issued.

May 24.

The Queen's Birthday. We were now with General Rundle. Major Dalbiac had rejoined us, and it was evident that 34th Company were to take an honourable position in the advance towards Senekal. We rose long before daylight; by 6 a.m. we were well on the way, on a Senekal road. Section III. were left flank, advance guard. It was a long and arduous day's march, of about fifteen miles, direct to Beldban. Our guard work took us in a less direct line. We camped about four o'clock in the afternoon.

May 25.  
Reveille  
2.30 a.m.

We had been given to understand that this was to be an important day's progress, and our Company was ready to start long before light. It was a crisp, frosty morning. The Headquarters camp was a mile beyond our camp, on a little hill. Dalbiac took us at a gallop in the dark up the hill and halted us near General Rundle's tent. For the past two days I had been suffering from diarrhoea, and I now informed the Sergeant of this. We waited and waited for orders, dismounted in long, matted, frozen grass. It was a very chill morning. At half-past five Major Dalbiac rode up from Headquarters and shouted a request to Sergeant Tomlin for two men with good horses for despatch work. Davern and I were ordered to fall out, and Major Dalbiac gave Davern a despatch and communicated its contents to both of us. It was an order to Captain Firman to bring up the 35th Company from Ferreira's Farm without delay. This meant for us a ride of about forty miles to our left rear, and neither of us had ever been nearer that post than patrols from Bester's Flats had taken us. This was the last we ever

saw of Major Dalbiac and some other good comrades. As we wheeled away from him and brought our rifles from the carry to our buckets, he said, "Do you fully understand?" "Yes, sir," said Davern, and we rode off.

From this point, until the night of the 27th, three days, I must first outline the movements of Davern and myself, and then turn back and give the essential particulars of what happened to my Company during the same period, particulars that have been selected from a mass of notes and correspondence on the subject that were furnished to me by men present, and from personal notes and a rough survey I made of the main position at Senekal.

Davern and I decided to travel southwards until we got within sight of the big Bester's Flats Berge, and to make them our principal landmark in the trend that we should have to make westward. (See a dotted line in Map of Lines of March.) During the morning we rode through the advancing column of General Boyes, and later we met stragglers, and about noon we met a little party of my own Section, among whom were Groome and Faber, who had been on some special duty that had delayed them.\* After that we rode on, mile after mile, without meeting a soul, except two wandering Colonial scouts, and a few Kaffirs. We passed by farm-houses, and here and there bought milk, eggs, and bread. At these farms we only saw women and one or two old men—no young men, they were all on commando. The women, with very anxious faces, plied us with questions, which we evaded. They were evidently expecting news of combat, and we made our own deductions. It was a long ride, sometimes on roads, at times over trackless kopjes, or over broad stretches of veldt. The crossing of many Winburg roads and farm roads puzzled us. We felt we should be lucky if we struck the right one at last.

\* They had been looking for Major Dalbiac, having a despatch from Headquarters telling him of the advance. Major Dalbiac had, however, already rejoined our Company with the Gun Section.



We had few particulars to go by—only the outlines of a few now very distant bergs, and those we were leaving far to the left. About an hour before sunset Davern's horse became very weary, and he dismounted. I volunteered to proceed alone, and asked him to wait at a conspicuous turn of a road to which I would return. I pushed on for about four miles, scouting to right and left for camp, for I felt that it could not be far off. At last in the dusk I caught sight of an Imperial Yeoman riding up a slope. I was dismounted, having had to get through a barbed wire fence. I tied my horse to a post and ran forward shouting. Presently the rider halted, and on coming up to him I found him to be Captain Firman himself, riding out to visit his pickets. I told him how I came to be there. I said Davern held the despatch. He rather wondered how I had ridden to within his pickets without being challenged, and he ordered me to get the despatch without delay. I rode back to Davern and told him how I had fared, and we both rode into the 35th Company's camp and delivered the despatch.

By this time we were desperately hungry, for we had given ourselves no time for meals and we had ridden far. We found an immense camp fire, and with the eggs I had procured I made a most savoury scramble. We had no rations and had difficulty in getting them, although Firman had particularly ordered us to draw them. The Quartermaster-sergeant, who is somewhat of a potentate in all Companies, raised many difficulties. We also fought for the rights of our horses, and, as quickly as possible, we made for the outskirts of camp, picketed our horses, and turned in. It was a very fine but cold night. We thought of our Company, discussed what they might have done, but we did not guess that by that time our comrades had received a terrible baptism of fire, that Dalbiac and others were dead—in fact, that our Company was "cut up!"

May 26.

Captain Firman broke camp early in the morning and

by dawn the 35th was out on the road towards Senekal, following the general direction we had come the previous day. We marched about eighteen to twenty miles, and camped by a large Kaffir kraal.

As we did not belong to the 35th, and having no orders, Davern and I decided to ride with the waggon which was driven by Meeson, a man who, like ourselves, had beaten about the world a bit. Both Davern and Meeson knew South Africa well from end to end, and Meeson had also lived, many years, in "the West," so we all talked Colonial talk, ranging from New Mexico to Mafeking. At noon one of the waggon wheels acquired a "hot box," and setting this right threw us far behind the rest of the column. Davern and I stopped for lunch at Beldban, at a house of a family named Claasen (Beldban, Doornfontein, Senekal District). Here we got a midday meal of coffee and bread and butter. We overtook the waggon and went on with it—a slow, weary journey—and arrived at Senekal after dark.

May 27.  
Sunday.

We had some difficulty in finding the location of our camp. Great picket fires were blazing in the streets and the Church Square, to our right and left, as we rode up a main street of the town. The waggon went on in a direction doubtfully given us by a sentry. I halted at Headquarters to question a non-commissioned officer, on duty there, as to the whereabouts of our Company's camping-place. Just then an officer stepped out from the shadow. He had a long line of medal colours on his tunic, a sort of spectrum analysis of his career, and he said to me, very kindly, "Are you one of the 34th?" I said "Yes, sir." He then said very gravely, "Get down from your horse; I have something to tell you." I obeyed, and then he added, "It was your Company that was cut up the other day." I said, "No, sir; that was the —th Company," referring in my mind to something else. "No, no," he answered, "I am sorry that I mean your Company, the 34th. Your Major and others are killed." I understood in a flash that the 34th had at

last seen battle. I said hastily, "Are —, —, —, and — safe?" He said, "Yes, some of those you mention are here as orderlies; I will give you a list of the casualties." I said, "I will not wait, sir; I will go to my Company." I saw now that he thought I might have chums in the list, and his desire had been to "let me down easy." I galloped out on the dark road, after the waggon, and on the outskirts of the town, beyond the cemetery, we came upon camp. I was very tired and hungry. A man of another Company gave me some very strong tea; it had been soaking for hours and was bitter and cold, but it was better than nothing. The rest of the Yeomanry seemed to wish to show any of the 34th men what courtesy they could, thinking, I suppose, that 34th had had a nasty knock. I attended to my horse and turned in early; there was little desire to talk and the night was cold and cheerless.

May 25.

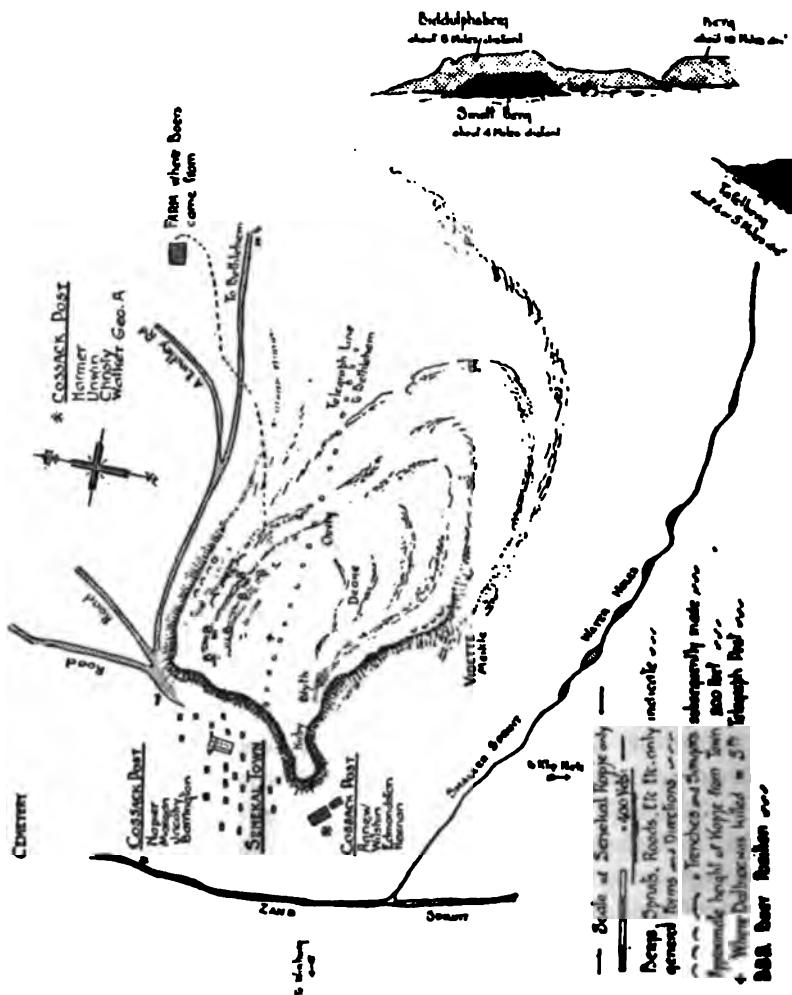
A return must now be made to Friday morning, May 25th, to Beldban. It will be remembered that we, Davern and I, left the 34th Company at 5.30 a.m., awaiting orders outside General Rundle's Headquarters. I wish, if possible, to follow 34th's movements and doings to the point of our rejoining three days later. I realised that this was a period of importance in the story of our Company, and I at once made endeavours to collect information from every available source. I made memoranda of many interviews, and I have in my possession written descriptions of what happened, from many points of view. It is not possible or necessary to publish them all. I have selected a few of the most interesting accounts, and I have essayed to arrange the particulars of all into one general and trustworthy summary.

Probably not over sixty men fell into line that morning at Beldban. At this date there were barely fourscore men in the firing line and many of those happened to be told off to some especial duty that took them for the moment from the line. To the trusty little force



remaining was given, this morning, the position of advance guard. There is no doubt but this arrangement was a highly satisfactory one to our Major. It was one more good opportunity of bringing his men into touch with the elusive enemy. Since swords had dropped out of fashion he wanted to try the edge of his men—to see how they would fight. It was a daily hope of his, that we should have a fight. “Well, boys,” he would say, “we haven’t had a chance again to-day, but to-morrow the luck may change. Let’s hope so!” He was very keen to “have a go at them.” Perhaps constant disappointment made him interpret this day’s orders too liberally; at any rate as soon as he received permission to start, which was about 5.30 a.m., he was off at the gallop, and he continued to gallop until he was very far ahead of the General’s forces. He was careful to keep in extended order, and at the end of three or four hours he ordered a walking pace, and as he came in sight of Senekal, about ten o’clock, he called a halt, and rode into the town alone. The pace they had come had caused a number to fall out by the way. When Major Dalbiac returned, which he did in about half an hour, he had an expression of disappointment on his face, and he said that “the d—d Boers had cleared that morning.” He gathered up the men present and rode quickly into Senekal, through the town, and out on to the ridges north of it, and from this point, it seems, a body of Boers was seen making away. With the assistance of Mr. Kennard and Sergeant-Major Roller he established four Cossack posts. As will be seen, on reference to the accompanying plan, Senekal lies on a more or less flat strip of land, between a deep spruit and the precipitous end of a kopje. The kopje is directly east of the town. The houses and church of Senekal might almost be said to nestle under a slightly curved cliff about two hundred feet high. Speaking generally, the positions of the Cossack posts were correctly chosen, but the ground around is so irregular, so exceedingly deceptive by reason

of the windings and junctions of spruits, the gulleys, and the tumbled nature of the surrounding ground that has the appearance of slightly rolling veldt, that perhaps



positions that would have rendered security more certain might have been chosen. This, of course, is an afterthought, suggested by an after-knowledge of the ground.

Perhaps the best *use* of the positions actually chosen was not made. The men must have been both hungry and tired, and rigid vigilance, in some cases, may have been relaxed. The positions of the posts were, broadly speaking, north, west, and south of town, and the fourth was upon the summit of the kopje. The members of the latter post seem to have scattered themselves in various positions on the more or less flat area of the summit. Besides these posts, a few men, under Roller, halted at the south end of the town. They were a little reserve of the Company, and they remained liable to be called upon for such duties as might arise. Major Dalbiac and Lieutenant Kennard and a few men returned to the centre of the town. Upon first entering Senekal, a Free State flag, which was flying on a pole in the street opposite the church, was secured.\* The inhabitants seem to have been divided in disposition towards us. Some appeared to be glad we had come; others were reserved and non-committal, evidently very much in sympathy with the Boer cause, and ready to perform for the enemy any secret intelligence service in their power. It was a spy of this kind which made it so easy for the Boers to do what they did. It is certain that some one in the town rode out and gave the information that only a small English force had arrived, and explained the nature of the defence that had been established. In the meantime our stragglers had dropped in, one by one, and were probably sufficiently mindful of the inner man to delay reporting to their Company, until they had purchased a square meal. There were probably a dozen of our men so bent in Senekal. The Major was occupied in the performance of various duties, he received some arms, a few surrenders were made to him, and he endeavoured to obtain information in regard to the enemy. General Randle's force was still far in the rear.

Such appears to have been the position of affairs at about one o'clock. At this time firing began.

\* This flag is in the possession of Captain Prideaux-Brune.

The Boers seem to have been well informed as to the weak points of our guard. They knew every inch of the ground, and the simple and great possibilities it possessed in the way of affording cover for their approach and attack. They advanced, apparently, in two bodies from an easterly direction. One from a farm on the north-east of the kopje; these Boers followed a depression on its north side, along which the Bethlehem Road trends eastward. They seem to have arrived at the rather abrupt north edge of the kopje before any practical demonstration could be made against them; indeed, their presence there, *in such a large force*, could not have been known to the little band that charged to the summit. The other body of the enemy crept down the spruits to the south and south-west of town. The deep dongas here are of very tortuous course, and afford many points for attack with the best kind of cover. The firing appeared to be from every direction. Our men were bewildered. They found that they could not leave the town in any direction, without exposing themselves to fire, the source of which they could not discover.

Some one had early delivered such sparse news as there was to Major Dalbiac. The situation was puzzling. He quickly made up his mind, however, that he must maintain his hold upon the kopje. With a few men, whom he hastily called together, he joined the little reserve, which Mr. Kennard had now rejoined, and a few of the members of two Cossack posts, at the south-west corner of the kopje, and remembering that the south side was not an impossible ascent, he charged directly for it, urging the men to use haste in their movements. In such a terrible climb it was impossible that all his men should arrive on the edge of the tableland of the kopje simultaneously. Less than thirty men rode up, and there were two men shot in the ascent, and horses were wounded. The little band never wavered; they rode forward towards the sound of the firing, and rode almost upon the Boers, lying in their rocky cover. All instantly dismounted.





FREDERICK W. SHELLS.

Killed in Action, May 25, 1900.

*To face page 95.*



An order was issued to Roller to take two or three men and try to save the horses. Most of the horses were shot. The Major was killed; he fell dead with a bullet through his neck. The rest lay on the ground, to make a fight and the best of a bad job. They had no cover, except the short grass, which was no protection. More men were wounded, and gallant young Deane, rising on his knee to take a good aim, was shot through the head, falling dead without uttering a sound. When Shells was shot he remarked it was hard luck being taken off before striking a single blow. Kennard appeared to be painfully wounded in the knee and face. It was a hopeless fight. Agnew went to the Major, but saw that he was dead. Agnew was himself wounded shortly after. The Boers were, at a distance of less than a hundred yards, pouring in an unceasing hail of bullets. Behind their rocks they were comparatively secure, and they outnumbered the force opposed to them, at the least, five to one. Nevertheless, our men continued their firing. But they now began to experience a cross fire from their right, and they saw the Boers were creeping round towards their rear; to their left was the precipitous cliff overlooking Senekal. To retreat, to pass over the level ground in rear, would have meant annihilation. Surrender was not made without considerable discussion, but it was made. Thirteen unwounded men surrendered, and six unwounded men, in the rear, escaped under heavy fire. Roller, with some difficulty, got Weisberg, who was wounded, upon his horse, and brought him to the town.\* Roller rallied a little remnant, in a house yard to the southwest, and this band remained there, under fire from all sides, for over an hour. The Boers did not venture down into the town for two reasons: they knew that General Rundle's force could not be far off, and they did not wish to jeopardise their success, but they continued to fire

\* Roller was recommended by the General for the V.C., but Roller himself made very light of his services this day, and declined to give evidence, which act of modesty probably cost him that coveted order.

from the kopje. They made arrangements for the wounded, collected their prisoners, and withdrew from the kopje and the spruits just as the main body came into range. The western Cossack post had been able to join the Column, and had given information of the attack so that the artillery, upon getting within range, at once began to shell the kopje. But the main business of the day was concluded; the damage was done.

Other particulars than these are best gleaned from the following extracts and notes:—

Corporal Agnew\* returned from the hospital to our lines on October 21st, and on October 25th he gave me the opportunity of copying from his diary the following description of this fight from his own point of view.

"Senekal, May 25, 1900.—We left camp about 5.30 a.m., and galloped several miles, ahead of the Column, as advance guard. We arrived at Senekal (eighteen miles) without seeing any signs of the Boers. About ten o'clock a.m. Mr. Kennard sent Edmondston and me to pick up Heenan and Wilshin, and to form a Cossack post on the road to the right of the town near a kopje. We made ourselves comfortable, and bought some butter, bread, and bullocks' live which we fried. In an hour's time the rest of the Company (about twenty-five strong) came up and dismounted, and all was quiet until about 1.15 p.m., when we heard shots all round, and Sergeant Nicolson and J. C. Mollwraith galloped up from our rear, saying that bullets had been whizzing all around them. The Major (Dalbiac) was once sent for, and, arriving in a few minutes, he decided to take a patrol out and reconnoitre, telling me and the three other men to remain at our post. Hearing shots from over the kopje he changed his mind, and gave the order to gallop up the steep sides of the kopje. Mr. Kennard told us to fall in too, which Wilshin and I did, but Edmondston and Heenan didn't hear the order, and stuck to the post, notwithstanding bullets were buzzing all around. The Major went up a place which I thought only a goat could have gone up, but the majority of us went farther over to the right, where it was easier but still very difficult. Webster was hit through the fleshy part of the thigh, but thought it was only a stone thrown up by a horse. We arrived at the top pretty well together, and charged full tilt over the grass towards the other side (of the kopje), where we suddenly found ourselves within thirty or forty yards of some Boers. We were all mounted, straggling all over the place, but soon dismounted and lay down. Almost at once the Major was hit, and as he was on

\* Killed at Tweefontein, December 25, 1901.



about three yards from me I went to him, but found him unable to speak. I then started to fire, with my reins hooked over my right arm, but my mare getting hit near her near fore knee became unmanageable, and walked all over me and the Major, but without touching us, so I let her go. Looking around I found that I was about twenty yards ahead of Mr. Kennard and the others, so I scrambled back, and lay about six yards to the right of Mr. K. He suddenly said he was hit, and then, while taking aim, I felt a bang in the upper part of my left arm, then another hit on the belt, and at the same moment Mr. K. said he was hit on the leg. We all consulted each other, and decided that it was death to retire or advance, and, as we knew that the Boers were working round us, we decided to give in, especially as there was no hope of relief. I happened to have a white butter cloth in my pocket, so I put it on my rifle and held it up. Then I went forward and tried to get them to stop firing, which they were very slow to do.

"The Boers were very decent to us, and allowed me to take away my coat and blanket, and everything out of my wallets, also my cup and mess tin. We wounded ones were left in charge of the town doctor, but the others were taken off as prisoners. An ambulance brought us to the hospital (a schoolhouse in time of peace) where we had our wounds properly looked at. The troops were not long in coming up and our own doctors took us over."

Mr. Roller gave me the following particulars, most of them two or three days after the event, and a few subsequently.

"There were thirty-one of us, I think, altogether, who went up the hill. We started at about 1.15. It was a perfectly mad movement. We rode up the steep, sometimes almost precipitous, kopje until we got to the crest, and then there was an undulating grassy space. Presently we crossed a ridge in this space and we saw the Boers ahead of us, quite close, and standing up. We were on their skyline and in full view. They dropped among the rocks and opened fire briskly. I don't think any one gave the order to dismount, but all did instantly, with one accord, and lay in the long grass. Barring this grass we were fully exposed. The Boers started shooting the horses, as they were more easily seen, and almost every shot seemed to tell. It was for this reason that I rose and told Sergeant-Farrier Meek (because he, like myself, had no rifle), Weisberg, and one or two others, to try and get the horses away. I shall never forget that nice little walk of about thirty yards, until we got them over the skyline. Every horse except my little mare was shot. One grey, that Meek was leading, must have had nearly twenty wounds, it was simply streaming with blood. As soon as we got over the skyline we began to get enveloped once more by the Boers. They were working around on the eastern side of us. It was now that Weisberg was shot, and whilst I was cutting his sleeve and tying up his wounded arm a bullet went

through his water-bottle, and the horse by him was shot in the chest. At this moment some one ran to me and advised me to surrender, as the others had done, and I thought it about time to make tracks. I persuaded Weisberg to leave the place and come with me—he was in much pain. Some one now passed and made an attempt to help Weisberg to get mounted behind me, but it failed, for he was faint, and the man rode on down the kopje. I then made another effort to get him up—it seemed an impossible job—I leaned all my weight on the offside, fearing the kit would slip around, and at last he managed to get into place, and my mare galloped as if she had but ten stone on her. She seemed to think it was some Gymkhana race or something of the kind. You know I have won one or two things of that sort with her, and she really seemed to be enjoying herself.

"I understood that there were about 150 Boers opposed to us.

"Poor Freddy Shells must have crawled along by the telegraph line, east, thinking he was working towards the town. He never could find his way about. That is how the search party came to miss him. He was found in the morning by, about, the ninth telegraph post.

"When we came down, several of us held a house and garden, or yard."

Private Webster wrote to me on October 25, 1901. I have made the following extracts from his interesting letter:—

"I will do my best to give you an account of what I saw.

"We paraded at 3 a.m. on the morning of May 25th. We galloped and marched in the direction of Senekal, sighting that place about ten o'clock. Major Dalbiac then halted us and rode up to the town alone. In about half an hour he returned telling us the d—d Boers had left that morning. We then rode into the town, in a body, and right through it to an eminence on the north side, from where could be seen, in the far distance, a body of men galloping off. We remained on the lookout for half an hour or so, and then we were ordered back to the town. Cossack posts were now mounted on the main roads.

"The rest of us were allowed to dismount and to take it easy.

"I had the luck to secure a good loaf of bread and some milk, which I shared with one of the best men that ever breathed, I mean poor old Shells. Surely it was a fatal loaf! My half was shot through in my wallet, and the man with the rest of it was killed!

"We had been resting an hour, or may be more, when Captain Kennard joined us, and all of a sudden we saw Nicoll and Grumley galloping hard towards us. They said they had been fired on from a spruit and had had a narrow shave. At that moment we heard firing on the kopje on our right, and a bullet or two whistled by. Two men at once went to find Major Dalbiac, who galloped up in a minute or two and ordered us to charge the kopje and turn the devils out. At that very moment I got a terrific blow in my right thigh, and though

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H. S. DEANE.

Killed in Action, May 25, 1900.



RICHARD UNWIN.

Killed in Action, May 25, 1900.



I did not realise it at once, I soon knew that it was a bullet. The excitement was too great to think of giving up, so I galloped on up the kopje, getting up to the top at the same moment as the Major. His animal, a light chestnut, fell twice in the climb, but he pulled it up without dismounting. On reaching the summit the Major ordered us to dismount, shouting something to Sergeant-Major Roller. He then fell dead, shot by a Boer within twenty yards.

"My pony fell, shot in the head, as I dismounted, but with a scream she recovered herself and galloped down the kopje. That was the last I saw of my plucky little mount. She was one of the gamest little animals that ever carried a trooper.

"Kennard was hit in the mouth and knee. His agonised exclamations were terrible to hear.

"Poor Deane was on my left, quietly potting away, when, with a crash, a bullet hit him full in the forehead and he rolled over dead.

Kennard called out to Sergeant Tomlin to take command, and after a hurried consultation Tomlin ordered Agnew, who had a wound in the arm, to put up a white flag.

"The Boers then came out and took us prisoners. They marched off the able men under escort, and having arranged Kennard, Agnew, and myself in a line on the ground, told us they were retreating and would send doctors to us. A grey-bearded Free Stater took my knife and compass as mementoes. An ambulance came and we were gently carried, in stretchers, down the hill, and put into it, and it then galloped into town. We were placed in the schoolroom, and at the hands of the townspeople we received every attention.

"Unwin was soon brought in, in a dying condition. He lingered till midnight, and then died. He was shot through the lungs.

"During the night the bodies of the Major and Deane were brought down, and the shuffling feet must have sent me to sleep, for that is all that I remember of that dreadful day."

Writing from Bethlehem Court House to a member of the *Surrey Comet* staff, Private F. J. B. Lee says:—"You will no doubt have seen the bare official report of our Company's disaster at Senekal Hill, on May 25th, and you will be interested to know how I got on in the fight, and how we, who are prisoners of war, have since fared in the enemy's hands. About fifty or sixty of the 34th had been pushed on independently on reconnoitring work to Senekal, where, finding it undefended, we hoisted the Union Jack, and then we proceeded to collect arms and ammunition. This was about 10 o'clock. Half our number were out patrolling roads, doing Cossack post duty, &c., and of these we can get no news. Some surely may have escaped. I was sent early in the day to the rear with a message, long before the Company reached the town, and as my mare was nearly done up by several days' long marches, and was minus a shoe, I walked her for several miles, rejoining those of my comrades still left in the town

about one o'clock. I got some buttermilk and bread, and had just finished a bargain with a Kaffir, trading a filled snuff-box for a bracelet of native manufacture, when firing commenced on our outposts, one of which came in for all it knew, with the report that the enemy were in force to our right and rear. We were then in the town under the hill, and soon formed up in line facing our rear, which seemed the point of the enemy's attack. Their fire ceased, however, for a minute, but broke out on the further side of the hill at our back, and it was decided to go for the crest of the hill, and, if possible, hold it, for it was evident the enemy were in force in front and rear, if not on both our flanks. We wheeled right about and extended to find available paths up the steep and rocky sides of the kopje. Then, as we scrambled up, the firing to our rear recommenced, the little spits of dust catching the eye where the shots struck about us. After going along the steep side of the hill, crab-fashion, for some time, I at last found a way to the crest, and called to three or four of the others nearest me, who were still scrambling about for a path. Those who were in the rear and who are still left, say that four saddles were emptied in making the ascent. On reaching the top, which, as usual, was flat and devoid of cover, I found the Major already up, with some half-dozen fellows, among whom was Sergeant Shells, who had his horse shot under him, and who immediately afterwards was shot in the back. Without waiting, we galloped right on to within sight of the Boers, who had shot one if not two of the Cossack post placed there, and who were emptying their magazines into us at thirty to forty yards from just below the crest-line. In this short gallop Sergeant Meek had two horses shot under him, and, as soon as we dismounted to fire, men and horses were hit from rifle fire at short range from all sides. The Major was shot dead; the Captain was wounded in two places, and, as far as we know, our casualties are eleven killed, five wounded, and thirteen prisoners, out of thirty men who attempted the ascent of the hill. It was a desperate climb, and as hot a quarter of an hour as any one would want. My mare 'Lassie,' besides being able to climb like a goat, was perfectly still under fire; indeed, all the time I was lying and firing from my rifle and Mauser revolver, she stood quietly by me, her reins around my wrist. When it was seen that half of us had been placed out of action, with both our officers down, most of our horses done for, and no supports near, surrender was ordered, and now we are prisoners of war. My mare, I am glad to say, was one of the few untouched. The Boers on and around the hill were said to have numbered 150; anyhow, the commando was a respectable-sized one when it closed around us to return to their laager for the night. They have treated us most handsomely in every respect, and are doing all they know to soften our lot. For the first time for three months I last night slept with a roof over me, and last night, too, was the first time for a month at least that I had my clothes off. One other of the four men com-



prising my Sub-Section is here, one left wounded at Bloemfontein, and of the other no news yet has arrived from Senekal. You need have no fear for me, for I must repeat that the treatment here is undeniably good. We may go on to Pretoria, so address me there, as I understand prisoners of war are receiving letters from home."

Corporal Ouvry, who was one of the Cossack post on the summit of the kopje, gave me several interesting details, and confirms the statement that the Boers on the kopje advanced from the farm to the north-east of the kopje.

Private Hamilton Meikle relates that he was detailed as a single vedette on the south edge of the kopje, but considerably to the east of Corporal Agnew's Cossack post. Agnew and another man formed a double vedette to his south. A brisk firing from the spruit caused them to gallop in to their post, and he immediately followed. It was then that the Major came by. Meikle's horse was slow in climbing, and on the kopje top he found himself in the left rear of the leading men. When he saw that a surrender was to be made he called upon Cholmeley to make a dash to escape. He first ran to Roller, however, to tell him what had happened, and Roller told them to retire. Roller stayed with Weisberg. Meikle could not get his own horse to move, and turned and caught a loose one, and then followed Roller down. Roller picked up Edmondston and Heenan at the Cossack post, and they all took up a position in a garden surrounded by a stone wall, and they stayed there, under fire, until the Boers were shelled from the kopje. The only casualty they sustained in this movement was that Ouvry's horse was shot through the back, behind the saddle.

Corporal Jack Morgan says: "I have marked (in the plan) where our Cossack post was, by the spruit (a little north of west of town). I was on guard at the time of the opening of the Boer fire, and could not at first understand what was the matter, until the Boers opened fire on us, from the kopje, up which Dalbiac had charged. We joined a Wiltshire party of about twenty strong, and after a little firing we re-entered the town and went to the top of the kopje, and found Dalbiac, and helped to carry him down on a stretcher."

Private Christy writes:—"With regard to our Cossack post, Major Dalbiac sent Corporal Harmer, Unwin, Geo. A. Walker, and myself through the town to take up a position. (This was the north Cossack post.)

"Here we remained some hours. Harmer and I had actually patrolled out for more than a mile, to some Kaffir kraals, and brought in two English-speaking half-castes. Upon our return we foolishly loosened girths, unbridled, and also took off our rolled overcoats and rear packs, and threw our bandoliers to the ground and lay down, letting our horses graze. After a time Harmer left me in charge, and rode into the town to arrange for some dinner for us. He left his rifle on the ground.

"Presently we saw some two or three horsemen approaching; they were several hundred yards off, but we realised that they were Dutchmen, and we immediately bridled and tightened girths. As we mounted I shouted, 'We'll have a shot at them before we go,' and we rode further up the slope. Unwin led his horse instead of mounting. When we got to the top of the ridge we came face to face with a lot of Boers only a few yards off. They turned and galloped towards the rocks on the kopje, for they evidently thought there was a good number of us. They opened fire at us at short range. We turned and galloped for cover, shouting to Unwin to mount. The last we saw of him he was in the act of mounting.

"We galloped right into the firing from the top of the kopje, but after a time we found some of the other chaps, and took cover for an hour or more, until the artillery came up and the firing ceased. We reoccupied the town before any of the troops came up.

"Unwin must have been shot as he mounted. His horse was shot in several places. We found his rifle, and Harmer's, with the bolts removed.

"It is a marvel that Walker and I got away safely. We were not keeping a proper look-out, and Harmer had chosen a very poor spot for a Cossack post. It ought to have been farther up the ridge."

Another private writes:—"Had the Major lived a few minutes longer, there would have been no prisoners—but many dead."

Private C. A. Grout gave the following particulars, which accounts for the delay of four of the men:—"Corporal Grumley, Privates Frodsham, Banks, and I went out as a sub-section, as scouts to the right of the advance guard. We took four prisoners and seven rifles, and two black interpreters, and arrived in Senekal late. After buying a dinner we were forced by the firing to join the Wiltshire Company in the spruit. Afterwards we kept up a fire from an old cemetery."

#### LIST OF CASUALTIES.

##### *Killed.*

Major Dalbiac	shot through the jugular.
Sergeant Shells	" " " body.
Private Deane	" " " head.
" Unwin *	" " " stomach.

\* A brass tablet has been placed in St. Paul's Church, Valparaiso, bearing the following inscription:—

"TO RICHARD UNWIN,  
BORN IN VALPARAISO, AUGUST 2ND, 1879,  
LIEUTENANT CHILIAN NATIONAL GUARD.  
KILLED IN ACTION  
AT SENEKAL, SOUTH AFRICA, WHILE SERVING  
WITH THE 34TH COMPANY, MIDDLESEX IMPERIAL YEOMANRY,  
MAY 25TH, 1900.  
*A token of respect from the British Community in Chili.*"

*Wounded.*

Lieutenant Kennard shot through the face and leg.

Corporal Agnew       "       "       "       arm.

Private Webster       "       "       "       leg.

      Weisberg       "       "       "       arm.

*Prisoners.*

Sergeants F. W. Scott, W. Nicoll, Tomlin.

Sergeant-Farrier Meek.

Corporal Hely.

Privates Blyth, T. Lee, F. J. B. Lee, J. C. McIlwraith, T. Richards,  
Robertson, F. J. Weedon, and N. O. Walker.

Those who returned from the kopje top are as follows :—

Sergeant-Major Roller, Corporal Kirby, and Privates Cholmeley,  
Meikle, Ouvry, T. J. Wilahin, and Weisberg.

The four Cossack posts were as follows :—

North : Corporal Harmer, and Privates Christy, Unwin, and  
G. A. Walker.

West : Corporal Napier, and Privates Barrington, J. Morgan, and  
Jacoby.

South : Corporal Agnew, and Privates Edmondston, Heenan, and  
T. J. Wilahin.

On the kopje : Corporal Kirby, and Privates Blyth, Deane, and  
Ouvry.

The funeral of the killed took place in the afternoon at May 26.  
the Senekal Cemetery.

On the Boer side a Field Cornet named Nel was killed.  
He also was buried in the cemetery.

The Company rested in camp north of the cemetery, May 27.  
and in the evening Davern and I rejoined.

In the morning our Section, or what was left of it, May 28.  
rejoined our Company, which was camping hard by. The  
Company had, hitherto, been divided into four sections.  
Section III., my own Section, had suffered badly, seeing  
three were wounded and six were prisoners, out of less  
than twenty in the fighting strength. Of those of our  
Section III. who went up the kopje only two came back,  
Meikle and Weisberg, and the latter was wounded.  
Falling in, at the camp, our Company was now re-



organised into two Sections,\* instead of four, and I found myself one of Section II.

The effect of this smash up was that the following promotions were made:—

Quartermaster-Sergeant Cowan	was made	C.-Sergeant-Major.
Corporal Burrows	" "	Sergeant.
" Napier	" "	Sergeant.
" Grumley	" "	Quartermaster-Sergeant.
" Green	" "	Sergeant.†
" Harmer	" "	Sergeant.
Private J. Morgan	" "	Corporal.
" Ouvry	" "	Corporal.
" Thornton	" "	Lance-Corporal.

Sergt.-Major Roller was recommended for a commission by General Rundle, of which confirmation was received from the War Office a month or so later. He acted from this date as Lieutenant. The kits of the men killed were now offered at auction, as is the practice on active service. The things of Major Dalbiac were first offered, and they were arrayed on the ground for all to examine. The bidding for everything was spirited, and for many mementoes officers and men bid high. Mr. Roller bought much that was necessary to him now that he was an officer.

The sale was not finished before hurried orders came to us to saddle up and fall in, in our new Sections. We were not quite shaken down to the new order of things, and our movements lacked snap and there was some confusion. At midday we galloped out on a road north of Senekal and patrolled, halting on a ridge and placing guards or pickets to the front, men taking turns at the guards. Some Boers, during the afternoon, came in on foot, and in a Cape cart, to give themselves up, and to get orders to be allowed to go back to their farms! At sundown we returned and camped in the churchyard, in the centre of the town of Senekal.

\* The Company remained in this form until late in our campaign, when our numbers were so diminished that we rode all as one Section.

† Absent for a while, on duty, promotion dated from now.





SENEKAL CHURCHYARD CAMP, MAY, 1900.

*To face page 104.*



CAMP AT SENEKAL KOFJE, MAY, 1900.



I remained in the churchyard camp; I was told off for stable guard for the afternoon. Half of my new Section, Section II., went out to patrol the country lying north. Webster's horse came in—a little black cob—it had been shot on the 25th in the cheek, a very bad wound. May 29.

General Rundle engaged the enemy to-day near the Biddulphsberg, seven or eight miles east of Senekal. The enemy had taken up a strong position on the great bergs, east of Senekal, that, in the rolling but apparently level veldt, look like a fleet of gigantic monitors at anchor in a wide bay. It was said that little good resulted from the encounter beyond the ascertainment of the enemy's position and his approximate strength. There was also a rumour that orders had been received to create a diversion for the enemy, who were hardly pressing a British mounted force near Lindley.\* We heard that the casualties in this day's fighting were about one hundred and fifty, and that many of the wounded Grenadiers were burnt to death by grass fires.

I was called at 4.30 a.m. to be one of a patrol towards Biddulphsberg under Sergeant Napier. We had to go to General Rundle's camp. We started at 5.15 a.m., in the dark. The morning was raw and cold. The bergs looked very grand and beautiful in the haze at dawn. We came upon camp four or five miles from Senekal, on a Bethlehem road. We found that we had nothing to do, except to await orders, and none came for hours. We dismounted on the outskirts of camp and we unsaddled by sub-sections in turn. May 30.

I am writing this on the verge of the battlefield of yesterday and near the Yeomanry Camp. It is now warm and sunny. Napier, Barrington, and Lunn are writing letters, on the grass, in the sun. Palmer is mending his bandolier. I am sitting on a sun-warmed anthill, and all the world seems to be quietly waiting with us. The tired horses are lying down about

\* This afterwards proved to be true, the D.C.O.'s under Colonel Spragge being the force invested.

us, too weary with continual hard work to look around for grazing. On the surrounding grassy plain are rows and groups of waggons, tents, mules, cattle, saddle lines, and camps. The neighbouring big bergs loom in the smoke-hazy landscape. The lesser one just east of us is occupied by our men, and beyond is the Biddulphsberg, the main position of the Boers, yesterday. It is said the enemy have shifted. Here and there we see ominous parties of Red Cross men and fatigue parties moving about executing sad duties arising from yesterday's fight. There are large areas of black veldt, and veldt fires are still smouldering on the battlefield. It is said that the grass was set on fire by the Boers, to cover their real position, and because khaki on a black ground affords a fine mark. This is doubtful; the fires may have started from shell explosions or through the carelessness of our own men in throwing down unextinguished matches. Yet, beyond what is now supposed to be the Boer position, the smoke of further big burnings is drifting. Colonel Lloyd has been taken by, in a Cape cart. He was wounded in a charge yesterday—he was shot through the groin. It was said that his orderly, in carrying him from the field, was also wounded, but remained unmoved until he had carried his Colonel out of range. It was not altogether an enlivening time we were having, and one of the men began to relate how one of our Company had bought poor ——'s tunic and sent it home. "Oh, d——n it," said Palmer impatiently, "let's go and morb!"

About three o'clock orders came out for a general retirement towards Senekal. Napier was instructed to fall in with his men as a portion of the General's body-guard. We saddled and waited close by Headquarters, and presently General Rundle appeared, issuing short, snappy orders to members of his Staff. He seemed pleased over some news just received, and he sent out to the front (now becoming our rear) Brigade-Major Wood to hasten General Campbell. Presently some of



the 16th Brigade marched past. General Rundle was now walking up and down past a little writing-table, upon which a secretary was writing a despatch and examining maps. The tents had been struck, and all was movement. As Major Romilly, who was mounted, passed by with the Guards regiment, General Rundle walked quickly up and shook him by the hand and warmly and feelingly said, "How are you, my dear Romilly? I am very glad to see you. I shall be always glad to see you after such fighting as you and your men showed us yesterday." This was said so that all around could hear. The General and Staff were about the last to move; the camp dissolved gradually into a long convoy, which we watched as it crept towards Senekal. We next galloped, at a good pace, along the moving line of waggons and troops, through clouds of dust. We then joined our Company in a camp on the slope north of Senekal, near the cemetery where our comrades are buried.

In the morning we were formed in line to receive May 21. scouting orders and instructions from Mr. Brune. At 11.30 we saddled, and again waited in line for orders, it was said to go to Ficksburg. A little while after we suddenly got orders to move, and Mr. Brune took us at a furious gallop through the town of Senekal, around the kopje, by an exceedingly rough and stony road to the south-east. After passing the town we galloped in double file, for the path became narrow and difficult, if not dangerous. Two or three horses rolled headlong with their riders, but this furnished no excuse for stopping. In the clouds of dust raised no one could see except the leading files. It was suffocating work. My little mare, Whirlwind, behaved grandly, and had every nerve astrain, springing over holes and ruts, and from side to side, to avoid stones and boulders. I patted her neck, and praised her, called her my best friend, and a good little mare, told her I knew the kit was heavy and the road bad. I think we understood each other very well. Three or



four miles out we found ourselves on the slopes of the veldt near Tafelberg, on the long grass, where the dust ceased, and we soon saw that we were left flank guard to the moving column. Here we dismounted and lay down in extended order, in the afternoon sun, and remained for hours watching the column's progress, and keeping watch towards Tafelberg. I had my telescope and could plainly make out moving objects on the summit, which I reported to Mr. Brune. He did not think much of it. He sent Napier and two men out to reconnoitre. They got divided in some way, and the men meeting some of the enemy returned, but Napier did not return, much to my disquiet. We greatly feared that he had been taken prisoner. It was almost sunset before we proceeded, and as we descended the slopes converging towards the road, it became intensely cold. One or two of the men were actually suffering, for the day having been warm they had on little underclothing. They put on their overcoats, and immediately got into an unkindly trouble with our leader in consequence. He spoke very harshly, saying that nothing would disclose us to the enemy like these dark overcoats. We thought that if overcoats were dangerous our close order must be much more so! After a while it became so intensely cold that all were allowed to cloak. Our progress was slow, over very rough veldt, or through an occasional mealie field and donga, and we at last came into camp, sometime after dark, to find that we had come only seven or eight miles, in direct line, south of Senekal.

## CHAPTER VIII

### KLIP DRIFT NEK

**R**EVEILLE was early; we started at 6.30 a.m. to scout 1900.  
June 1. on the right flank of our big column on the march towards the south or south-south-east. Mr. Prideaux-Brune commanded the company, Mr. Roller was second in command. Our column—transport and convoy—extended over seven miles, on the plain before us, and formed a most imposing sight. We had a long day, varied by gallops and long halts, at times strung out in a long, extended file, each man keeping his distance and direction with the one in front. We came to camp long after dark, and I found I was for night guard.

The two Sections, under Brune and Roller respectively, June 2.  
Reveille  
4 a.m. scouted as left rear guard for an hour or two, when word was brought to us that a column was advancing upon us in another direction, in rear. It was thought to be the enemy, and our Section II., after a long, hard gallop to a position in sight of this column, was detached to scout down towards its advance guard. We watched the movements of the advancing men with much expectation. It turned out to be a convoy of our own, which had taken a different road from Senekal. We were all much pleased to find Napier with this convoy. We had thought him a prisoner beyond doubt. After a long midday halt we took this small convoy on to Klip Nek camp, rejoining there the main body we had left in the morning. Napier, it appears, had lost his direction, but had fallen in with

some troops and returned to Senekal, and came on again with this convoy.

June 3.  
Reveille  
5 a.m.  
Sunday.

It was bitterly cold, and, as there was no duty ordered, there was much "grousing" at having to turn out in the dark. Thanks to Napier, we were allowed to turn in again until sunrise. Twelve of us, however, had to be ready by 7 a.m. to go out on patrol with Roller. We scouted on the great kopjes eastward of our camp, and crept up upon one or two farms in the kloofs of the mountain-side. I was one of the left advance guard of the party. Roller and a sub-section kept to the lower levels and watched and supported us. Finally we came to the farm in the kloof-bend, formed by the kopje (afterwards called "Middlesex Kopje," see June 13th) to our front and the north-eastern hills. We found plentiful supplies of good things to eat, and when Mr. Roller rejoined us here I obtained permission to fill a sack with bread, butter, and oranges for division among the section. All this, as well as many tumblers of milk, was paid for at high prices. I was told off with two others to go through the house to search for arms. Two or three women began to cry at this, although we did everything quietly and orderly. I had my doubts as to the sincerity of the tears, especially as one of the buxom young women was particularly saucy and coquettish. I was allowed to return to camp by a short cut with the sack of provisions. On my way in I overtook some flankers of a force from Hammonia (on the Senekal-Ficksburg Road south of us). They were some of Brabant's Horse, and one of them was a Texan with whose family my brothers and I had been acquainted. I regretted to be able to give him a piece of news which affected his family disagreeably—the recent bursting of the great dam on the Colorado River. He was much surprised. I then told him I had bread and butter, and would he come to lunch? "Bread and butter! Of course I will!" At lunch we had a talk over the Far West we had both left behind.



June 4.  
Reveille  
4 a.m.

All the Imperial Yeomanry and mounted men of our camp made a reconnaissance in force, in the plain to the north and north-east, along the foot of the hills that border the vast tract of hill country and basins that lie towards Rooi Krans, Willow Grange and Ficksburg, south and south-east. The force must have been nearly four hundred men. We did not meet the enemy, and, thinking he might be on the hills, we turned southward up the steep kopjes. All this was done in open order, for in all our scoutings and reconnaissances for the past four or five days we had expected to come into contact with the enemy. We had failed to find them, so far, although it was certain there was a large force in the neighbourhood. We got on to the tableland unmolested, and rode through the thick, high grass of the kopje-tops, and Kaffir mealie fields, south-west, and descended the big berg, north-east of Klip Nek, and got into camp about three o'clock p.m.

The site of Klip Nek camp is a narrow pass between small hills that lie at the foot of big bergs. It is the entrance from the Senekal plain, north of Klip Drift, into the mountainous districts of Hammonia and Ficksburg. The scenery is highly picturesque, and the plains and mountain ranges, under the changing and varied coloured lights, are indeed worth watching. The very shapes of the kopjes are so peculiar as to lend a most fantastic charm to the view in any direction.

The grass is very thick and luxuriant in this district. At this season it is long, and dead, owing to the extreme frosts at night. The colours of the grass are of every imaginable tint of khaki, from the ordinary khaki to a ruddy, and even purplish khaki.

"Camp" is a short and simple term, but it includes an organisation of some complexity. A Company, complete, does not begin and end merely with a number of armed men and officers; if it did, the question of greater mobility would not be a difficult problem. For myself, I think that much that we English hold as necessary to efficiency

might be either simplified or done away with. All that will be thought out later—when the knowledge ceases to be helpful, perhaps. Some such thoughts occurred to me as I took a few notes of our camp. It was too large a subject for any one to tackle offhand; such military matters had a growth and evolution through experience, from long before Cæsar's time, down. The headings and items I recorded might seem incongruous enough, yet I felt they all had to be taken into consideration in arriving at any right understanding of the case. Object-lessons were before my eyes. Tents, waggons, Cape carts, sacks of mealies and oats, "oat hay," and straw forage; fuel—a great scarcity of it—so that furniture, window-sills, doors, fig-trees, harmoniums and other instruments, from flagrantly and wickedly aggressive farms, and ox dung, all figured in the wood pile at "the cook-house door"; the cook, a useful character, a tailor, cobbler, watchmaker, and gunsmith rolled into one—Weary Willy, we called him—an old Burmah campaigner, grumbling among his dixies, pans and biscuit boxes; the Sergeant-Major holding forth to his Kaffir drivers and butchers; the Quartermaster-Sergeant making up his records of rations and forage. Fatigue parties. Stable guards and their horses. The oxen. Saddlery dressed in line. Rifles stacked. Rifle inspection. Latrine and refuse pit digging. Watering horses. The Hospital and Army Service Corps, &c., almost *ad infinitum*.

June 5.

We remained at Klip Drift all day, to rest the horses and men. I went over the Artillery Hill, to a spruit, and washed clothes and bathed—the first time for weeks that I had had an opportunity to do so. Kelsey went up to our farm (of last Sunday), but there was nothing left but one chicken; this he got, and we dined on chicken and dixie mutton soup, inviting Groome to dinner for 7 p.m.

After a danger has passed the situation which invited it very often presents its humorous side for recollection of it to fasten upon. Jacoby returned to camp this afternoon with an amusing story of adventure. He had been



sent to Hammonia with despatches on Sunday, June 3rd. He duly delivered his despatches that evening and remained the night there. Early next morning he was ordered to fall in with General Rundle's escort, and after riding some hours with them he was told to return to Klip Drift Camp with more despatches. The neighbourhood was so entirely new to him that he soon lost his direction, and a Kaffir he presently met informed him that he had managed to make his way into the heart of the enemy's positions. After wandering about all day, he came to a farm dam, where he watered his horse. From the opposite bank a Kaffir girl ran to the neighbouring farmhouse and from it there hurriedly issued three alarmed and armed Boers. He realised that he would be captured if he did not use his wits to the best advantage, so with a hand raised he rode confidently forward, saying, "Don't fire, I shall not fire on you!" "What do you want?" said one of the burghers. "Fodder for three hundred horses!" answered Jacoby. Somewhat amazed the Boer explained there was no fodder there, and asked where the English commandoes were. Jacoby indicated two or three directions upon which the Boers mounted, and after renewing the promise not to fire, rode rapidly off, evidently much impressed with the news. After spending a miserable night in the open, next day, with the assistance of a Kaffir as a guide, he met a patrol of Brabant's Horse, with whom he rode into Klip Drift.

Eighteen men of our new Section (No. II.) went out, under Roller, on patrol, from Klip Nek Pass, towards the north-east, over the same ground as the reconnaissance in force of June 4th, except that we did not go up to the tablelands of the hills as we did then. We rode about four miles, crossing three spruits or dongas running down from the kopje range to our right flank, the farther one being deep, at places fifty or sixty feet deep. I was made the left flank scout, and I scouted along these dongas alone. Fowler and Davis scouted the heights of the kopjes to the right. I rode up the bottom of the

June 6.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

third donga, towards the Company, for we were now close upon a kopje to our front, one jutting out from the range at our right flank. It was very quiet and solitary at the bottom of this donga, and there was a strong smell of wild beasts, and the tracks of many animals that came there to water. Among the red, marly rocks on either hand I saw many conies or rock rabbits. (That strange little beast, Hyrax, said to be distantly allied to the elephant.) Presently I found a place that I could ride up, on the far side, and saw that a few of the men had crossed the donga.

Those of us who had crossed were contemplating a move up the nek to our right front, and did go a short way up, when we descried horsemen galloping towards our right scouts, and from the front tableland, and at the same time rapid firing was heard from the front on the nek. The right scouts came in, telling us it was a patrol of Brabant's Horse, only a few men, who had run upon the enemy, just beyond the nek. Presently we saw the following Boers, and they, catching sight of us, stopped in their career and turned to our left front, on to the heights of the kopje. They proceeded to turn a hot fire on us, and we took cover in the donga nearest to us, but Roller immediately saw that it was a very bad position, and took us to the middle donga, where we had pretty good cover. We dismounted, "led" horses, and lined the edge of the bank. Soon after we were under cover the Boers ceased fire, and we watched those on the summit of the kopje, on the skyline, but could not see those who had descended a little towards us, and were among the rocks. Mr. Roller was for holding the donga at first, to see if Brabant's Horse would return or if reinforcements would be sent from Klip Nek, on their information. He decided to remain a while, but it soon appeared more than probable that if the Boers were in force they would outflank us, on the right from the kopje range and on the left from the dongas. However, we remained watching the enemy for nearly an hour. Jacoby



was sent out as sentry to our left rear, but was not fired at, but the moment we issued from the donga, the Boer fire began hotly. We emerged from the donga in extended single file. Roller waited until last. Immediately preceding him were Napier, Barrington, and myself. We galloped on, to the extended and retreating line, thinking Roller was behind us. The bullets were knocking up spiteful little puffs of dust around us. I came near Blount when he shouted "Keep extended, C——." Then Napier shouted, "Where's Mr. Roller?" He had disappeared, and thinking he might be wounded, or needing help, Napier turned back with Barrington towards the donga. I followed, but we had not gone far before we caught sight of Roller sailing along under the kopje range (now our Section's left), and we turned again and raced after the line, and were soon out of range. Not a single man or horse was hit, although the bullets came close enough to please any of us. Proceeding two miles, we met three scouts of Brabant's Horse on the lookout for us. We returned together to Klip Nek, under the mercy of God, safe, one and all of us. This was the first time I had come under fire. I do not think I realised the danger at the time. I felt rather elated, and pleasantly excited than otherwise. I noticed that the horses were keenly alive to something unusual and that as long as the bullets came near us they remained in a state of high excitement.

It seemed that the original idea of the General, or the officer who planned this excursion, had been for our patrol to get around by way of this kopje and to make conjunction with the 35th Company, which had gone out in the morning in a south-easterly direction, to circle around towards us, and on our return to camp we found that the 35th were still in the field and there were camp rumours to the effect that they had been surrounded, but they all came in under Captain Firman, shortly after sunset.

During our absence there had been news of the war read out in camp. The news of the occupation of Pretoria by Lord Roberts was received with much

cheering. We had, it was said, recaptured all our prisoners. We had heard some days ago of the occupation of Johannesburg.

About sunset, over a thousand men marched into camp, mostly the Scots Guards, 2nd Battalion. They came in to the sound of their pipes and drums. The fifes occasionally broke in upon the pipes with their shriller music. The whole camp cheered, and it was an enlivening incident. The black drivers and Kaffir servants were worked into a perfect frenzy by the skirl of the pipes.

June 7.

Our Section was chosen to scout ahead of the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards which marched towards Senekal to-day. The valley between here and Senekal is a wide, undulating plain, bounded by kopjes and distant higher kopje ranges and bergs. I was the centre advance road scout, Faber advance right, and Edmondston advance left scouts, all under Napier, with Barrington as connecting file. We led on the main Senekal Road, but for some reason the Column took a road trending to the left, which passed the Hibernia store. There are three or four roads along the valley in the direction of Senekal. The regiment halted at a farm by Hibernia store, about five miles from the Klip Nek camp; we scouts were  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles in advance, to their right front. There were, of course, other scouts on either flank, in rear of us. On observing the halt, Napier ordered us to close in, which we all did, with the exception of Edmondston, who had returned to the Column. We lunched together on the veldt, waited some hours, saw many koorhaans quite close, but did not dare to pot one for fear of alarming the rear. They are said to be excellent eating. After lunch the sky became overcast and a thunderstorm came up. Seeing camp had been pitched, we made a smart gallop towards it, but the rain came down in sheets, and we took refuge in a deserted farmhouse which was strictly guarded by a party of the Scotchmen. They were there (with fixed bayonets) to prevent the soldiers taking wood-



work from the house for fuel. This was rather like locking the stable door after the horse was lost, for doors, sashes, ceilings, and floors had all been damaged either by some passing column or by the Boers themselves. We stayed here an hour. A young "Jock" sentry showed me a Mauser bullet that had struck his ammunition pouch, piercing the brass shell of one cartridge and marking the bullet of another. He was keeping them as an edifying souvenir of Biddulphsberg.

We, Napier's little party, returned at a gallop to Klip Nek camp, enjoying the ride very much. The Scots Guards remained at Hibernia, establishing a post there. After sunset the thunderstorm came again, only it was much more severe than in the afternoon. I was night guard. Most of us passed a miserably cold, wet, and disturbed night. It hailed heavily for a few minutes, and the lightning was very vivid. It was the first rain we had had on the campaign from Norval's Pont (April 21st).

About twenty of our Section scouted along the same valley as we did yesterday, only more to the right, and along by the Ficksburg-Senekal telegraph line, towards Senekal.\* We scouted about ten miles, and heard cannon fire and pom-pom fire, apparently from the enemy's position on the kopje ranges to the north-east. A mile or so further on, we sighted the advance scouts for the Leinster Regiment, coming from Senekal, and for whom (although we were not aware of the purpose of our morning's work) we had scouted the valley. At first we thought they must be Boers, for the scouts retreated on sighting us, but presently we found that they were friends. We halted and lunched near a Boer farm, and bought their inferior butter at 2s. per lb., and then returned to Klip Nek camp at a trot, along the same line as our morning advance. I noted that the telegraph line was very well constructed, the posts being the Siemen's

June 8.

\* Lieutenant J. Birch, of the 36th West Kent Company, was riding at this date with the 34th Company as *pro tem.* Lieutenant. This arrangement was for a few days only.



patent, a neat, telescopic, iron post. The line was cut in few places, but the communication was effectually destroyed. On our return, at four o'clock p.m., we found many camp rumours afloat, but no real news. A fife and drum band held a practice in the evening. The night was very cold and frosty. An order was quietly passed around for us to lie with our arms beside us, and to be prepared for attack or attacking. A convoy came in this evening, and with it were our missing men from Winberg, Meikle, J. Morgan, and Lunn, and Barton who had been in hospital for several weeks. The three former had been to Winberg on duty. We heard that the firing of the morning had been the enemy's, at a force of Brabant's Horse on reconnaissance.

I observed to-day for the first time the aasvogels (a large, grey vulture) in considerable numbers on the carcasses of animals. In this district a species of crow is numerous—a glossy, black crow with a white patch or collar on its neck. I should say it is as large, or larger, than the English carrion crow. It caws like a rook, is sometimes gregarious and sometimes solitary. It roosts in the cliffs of the kopje sides, and presumably nests there. It is more or less a scavenger. Its beak is strong, and rounded almost to a hook. It has a curious habit of making a most peculiar rhythmical winding sound—apparently upon finding food on the veldt—not unlike the distant sound of the old watchman's rattle—"ka werky werky werky werk—ka werky werky werky werk." I have seen several secretary birds, solitary and handsome. Hawks of the kestrel type are common. There are many kinds of lizards, and but a few snakes at this season. By far the most noteworthy and striking feature in the natural history of this district or of the whole O.V.S. is the innumerable dome-like anthills.\* While they may be more numerous in certain areas of soil or positions, yet they are to be found in every conceivable class of locality; at the same time, for some unknown reason, some neigh-

\* See in the illustration, "Palmer with the Maxim," page 160.

bourhoods are bare of them. I observed them on solid rock foundations, much more commonly on the rich soil of the veldt, sometimes capping tall, isolated pillars of soft earth or clay, along the donga banks. If these ants choose a site nothing near it is an obstacle to them, a post, a stone, or strands of barbed wire are simply enclosed and built about. They abound in areas of thousands of acres on the veldt, from ten to fifteen or more yards apart, from one foot to three feet high; they are weatherproof, hardened, and fairly smooth. One rarely sees the silent, indefatigable, and slow workers; when a hill has been damaged by wild animal or convoy waggon wheel, or when some soldier has carved one into an oven or stove, one may watch these dull, blind, anemic ants groping, bewildered, and perplexed over the ruin. They apparently work from the inside, and when the rainy season has made the earth soft. A large hill must be the work of several seasons—perhaps many years. Patches of new galleries and storage cells are added in lobate layers. A fragment of a hill resembles in formation a coarse stable sponge. I have not yet seen this work in progress, although I have noted new lobes on a few hills. The galleries and cells are stored with short pieces of round grass stalk, cut off in lengths of from one-eighth to three-quarters of an inch. The ants in a hill, I think, vary in form; I have not, however, had opportunities to observe this point definitely. The greater number are of a very pale reddish colour, and have a globular, semi-transparent head, which has a pointed proboscis. The material for building must be treated by the ants in some way with a cementing or cohesive secretion. Observing their vast numbers (countless millions) their system, their instincts, their prevailing uniformity under isolated conditions, one is apt, in one's mind, to push back the earth's history a few cycles. My friend Groome says these are the white or burrowing ants, rarely visible on the surface and working at night. He thinks also that the numerous large holes on the veldt

in this neighbourhood are mostly the dens of the aardvark or earth pig—the African ant-eater.

The cony (daman, or rock rabbit, Hyrax) upon hearing approaching footsteps remains quite motionless, and might be, as far as appearance, a projecting rock; it is very alert, and disappears so suddenly and quietly that one doubts for the moment if one has really seen it.

Our men found on an anthill, on the veldt, some rude, Kaffir, baked clay modellings of animals, &c. Among others were the elephant, a horse, and a cart with little clay wheels.

June 9.

Reveille was at daylight. The night had been intensely cold, and there was no especial duty; we were therefore ordered to exercise the horses, in a circle, in the camp basin. The whole Company ran around, leading the horses, for upwards of an hour. It is an "off" day to-day, and the officers are trying to find off duties to occupy men who really need rest. I got Bowers to shoe my little mare, for her hoofs are worn and tender. I feel horribly dirty, with no opportunity to wash. The waggon coterie has been rudely disturbed to-day by receiving orders to clear out and mess in the lines.

It is said that the Boers have been greatly reinforced by men from other fighting centres.

The convoy brought in a few remounts. The mails brought are not for us, after all the hope and expectancy! How *are* all the folk at home?

There is even talk among the men of medals, and going home! I think there will be much fighting and hard work before there is a home-going. There is a promise of tents for us at last. There are only a few tents here, some belonging to scouts, and the hospital. The area of the camp basin, I should judge, is about three hundred acres.

On the north-east "Artillery Hill" there are now six guns. I persuaded Faber and J. Morgan to go over Artillery Hill with me to the spruit. We got a fine but very chill wash. I also got a chance to wash towels and handkerchiefs.

To the south and south-west of this pass is a very beautiful berg or mountain called "Wonderkop." The purple or violet tints at sundown are remarkable everywhere along the kopje ranges, but on this big berg they are exceedingly beautiful.

The grass must be very luxuriant in the summer; it is often long and thick, where cattle have not ranged. One variety of grass is extensively used for thatching by the Kaffirs; they called it "Tambuca."

Frosty morning. Exercised horses. I was told off for wood fatigue in the morning with Kelsey. We walked out towards the south, to Nieser's Farm, on a kopje—a long walk. We got a few sticks of dry wood near the farm, which a young, flashily dressed Boer objected to our carrying away. Had he spoken pleasantly we would have left him his sticks, but he spoke dictatorially. I met him half way by telling him to be hanged to him. He climbed down at once, and was mild but shifty. He was in riding breeches and leggings, so I suggested he had perhaps been to the Boer laager lately. He sidled away, and I commandeered the sticks. We then went up to the farm, where we found an old Boer, stout and red-faced, who said he was the young man's father. They had passes from our officers. They sold us, at high prices, eggs, butter 2s. per lb., milk, bread, bacon, and they had small, round cheeses at 7s. 6d. each. I cannot see the use of giving such people passes. They have shiftiness and treachery written all over them. We put our purchases in a sack, and went westward to another farm where we got ten pounds of butter at one shilling, half the price we had paid the old sinner on the kopje. All this produce we brought into our Section. About two miles from camp we came upon four or five loose wood fence posts, and further on a lot of Kaffir boys engrossed in gambling at cards. I took a log of wood and brought it to camp. One of the Kaffir boys laid claim to the log, and it was given back. It is hard enough to get wood here, it is harder to

June 10.  
Reveille early  
Sunday.

give it up. It was a Company fatigue, not a private one.

Later, I was waggon fatigue, and the site of our camp was changed to the other side of Klip Nek basin.

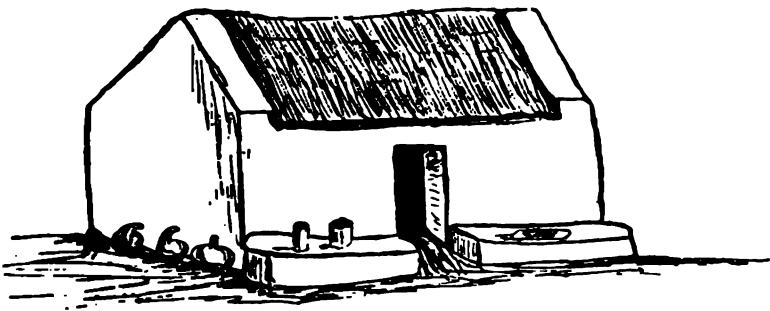
June 11.

There was an attack expected last night. There was also a hard white frost, and it was bitterly cold. Every man was ordered to stand by his horse, at 3.30 a.m., in full marching order. Shortly after I was told off to carry despatches to General Rundle's camp at Hammonia, a despatch and a couple of horseshoes to Colonel Mitford, and a despatch to Captain Peacocke. Sergt.-Major Peacock came to see that I got off promptly. The despatches were from Captain Firman. I started some time before daylight and went out on a lonely road, south. The ground was white, twinkling with hoar frost; it looked like a snow plain, in the half light. I did not meet a soul on the way. A night attack had been confidently expected in our camp, from the Boer positions to the east, on my left hand. I ran a good chance of being taken, had the enemy been about, but I came through all right. I saw General Rundle, Colonel Mitford and Captain Peacocke. I was ordered to be ready to return at twelve o'clock (noon) so I had a long wait. I unsaddled and fed my mare. I had much trouble in procuring anything to eat; but at last, by paying a couple of shillings to a Staff cook, I got a nice juicy beefsteak.

Hammonia is a part of a valley or basin almost surrounded by big bergs or kopjes in range. There is a good stream running some way below camp, and a mill-race is constructed at the Ficksburg Road crossing, or drift. This mill is one of importance, it supplies much grain and flour to the neighbourhood. There is a store house, and a few smaller houses, and a rather nice farm and mill residence. General Rundle's Headquarters were by a farm about a mile nearer Klip Nek than this mill. I had nothing to do but wait, so I took a few notes, and sketched the huts of the Kaffir kraal near Headquarters, just south of a long kopje covered with large, loose boulders.



This kraal is one of the neatest I have observed ; there were both circular and square huts, and a circular one with a square annex. Two were plastered in red, and others of a Portland cement colour. The plastering was



good of its kind and made a pretence to artistic ornamentation. The top coating was finished off in circular sweeps or dashes. Some of the walls had rudimentary decoration in simple colours, especially around doors.

Some of the huts had small enclosures of reed and cane work. There was a very curious refuse pit at this kraal, that I considered had some scatologic significance.

It was so cold this morning that for hours after sunrise the ground was white. The sunrise was superb, the violet, gold, and silver tints were very lovely.

About noon I was ordered to saddle. General Rundle asked through the Brigade Major if I had seen any Boers about, I said no. He then ordered that I was not to return alone, that another man was to be told off to accompany me. One of the Derby Imperial Yeomanry was ordered out. I galloped off with a lot of despatches, seven or eight blue official envelopes, for General Campbell and others. The ground that had been so white and sparkling in the morning was, now that it was thawed, dry, black and desolate, for the whole veldt, between the camps, had been burnt some days before. About half-way to Klip Nek the Derby man's horse fell and pitched a somersault. I jumped off quickly; at first I thought he had been shot, the fall was so sudden, but horse and rider got up with no worse than a severe shaking. I told him to come on slowly, I must push on, as I felt that General Campbell would be certain to send me on to Hibernia, with some of the despatches I had. I rode into Klip Nek, found General Campbell, and was soon off, with despatches, to Colonel Dalgetty at Hibernia Camp, where we had taken the Scots Guards on June 7th. I rode out and past Ingram's store, up to the camp—an interesting camp—where I saw some young subalterns playing football with their men. Colonel Dalgetty gave me, in turn, a note for General Campbell, which I took back to Klip Nek. General Campbell desired me to wait and take another despatch to Hammonia. I asked permission to get a fresh horse, for my mare was weary, it being now after sunset and almost dark. He asked me through his Aide how far I had ridden, and, upon my telling him, he said he had thought I was a Hammonia man, and that I was now to turn in to my lines.





MIDDLESEX KOPJE, JUNE, 1900.  
34th on the skyline.



MIDDLESEX KOPJE, JUNE, 1900.

Frosty. We exercised the horses in Klip Drift Camp. It promised to be a very quiet day. Weary Willie patched my coat with leather; the rifle-arm sleeve was worn off—and so were the knees of my breeches. In the afternoon I went over Artillery Hill to the spruit with Kelsey. While we were there we heard Boer rifle-fire to our south-east. Shortly after we saw our I.Y. men galloping, from the direction of our camp, towards the kopjes to the south-east Kelsey and I returned at once to camp, and found that all available I.Y. had been ordered out to investigate. The enemy retired, but it was found that two of the Derbys had been wounded. Our men returned to Klip Nek Camp at sunset. The night was a very cold one.

June 12.  
Reveille early



## CHAPTER IX

### MIDDLESEX KOPJE

1900.  
June 13.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.

THIS day began a rather more eventful time for 34th Company. A force of mounted men—34th, 35th, East Kent, Derbyshires, Rimington's Guides, and Driscoll's Scouts—rode out, before daylight, towards the heights where the skirmish of yesterday occurred. We rode up a big hill or kopje, which juts out from the higher mesa or tableland north-east and east of Klip Nek. Here we waited some hours, expecting an attack. We were hidden by a rise in the plateau. We were entirely ignorant of what would be expected of us. It does seem a pity that officers cannot take their men, in some measure, into their confidence. Groome said he thought the Derbyshires had been sent around, in a southerly direction, to try and drive the Boers towards us, and that we were where we were to cut the enemy off and smite them hip and thigh. That was as good as any other explanation, and it had to suffice, at any rate. This feeling of doubt and ignorance, under inaction in the face of the enemy, is trying and exasperating to men who have not had all the spirit hammered out of them. No attack was made, and we picked what lunch we could from scraps in our wallets. In the afternoon 34th was ordered to ride south, around the next jutting kopje, or headland from the mesa (which eventually proved to be our Company's position for the next few days), but we pushed further on than that to another similar headland, and watered our horses at a spring near a farm some



GEORGE C. ROLLER, D.C.M.



CHARLES C. NEWSHAM.

To face page 136.



distance beyond it. Brune, who remained near our morning's position, had ordered out five advance scouts—Sergeant Harmer, G. Grout, Banks, Bradley, and Caldwell. The first three were in advance. Harmer, very indiscreetly, took the scouts entirely out of sight of the main body, towards a farm up a hoek, around to the north-east. From the watering-place we turned back, and soon after, as we were leisurely retiring, we heard firing by the Boers, behind, and just after we were joined by Caldwell and Bradley at a gallop, who hurriedly reported that our advanced scouts had been attacked by the enemy, at less than one hundred yards range, that they had seen Harmer wounded, and that he had shouted orders to them to ride for their lives—which they had done. Harmer, Banks, and Grout did not return. We turned right about, and saw Boers gallop out from a hoek or narrow valley just beyond where we had watered, evidently in pursuit of Caldwell and Bradley. In the meantime the other Companies, East Kent, Derbyshires, and 35th, had scouted in other parts of the plain below and the mesa above—our Company were scouting the intermediate foothills or ridges. Some of the men of one of the other companies, to the south of us, now came under the fire of the Boers we saw. Thirty-fourth Company at once dismounted, and opened fire, then advanced at a run, under the leadership of a new officer of ours, named Newnham, to the cover of some boulders. Here Palmer, who was much excited by the absence of our three scouts, mounted, and was restrained with some difficulty by Newnham, who was splendidly calm and alert, from dashing headlong at the Boers alone. From these boulders I fired my first shot of the war. I was lying beside Barrington, and I fired at a Boer on a white horse, as he retreated with other Boers towards their hoek. Newnham ordered us to fix our sights at 1,200 yards; it looked very much nearer, but probably was not. Whether we did any execution or not I cannot say. Our fire caused the Boers to hurry away. After all the Boers



had disappeared we fell back to the mid-jutting kopje and occupied that position for the night. We named it "Middlesex Kopje." From recent experiences we knew that Boers were all along the high lands of the north and east and in our vicinity. At first we tried to obtain cover for our horses among the big boulders of this kopje, but subsequently, having been joined by Brune, we took them down to the west side of the kopje, nearest to Klip Nek Camp. Here we linked them in line. With the exception of one or two men, who remained with the horses, all climbed to the summit of the kopje. The Boers now came out from their hoek again and went to the farm, above their watering dam, and began firing towards our right. We turned the Maxim on them. It was nearing sunset, and the quiet evening hush, and the haze of dimming distance was settling over the golden veldt. The sound of the Maxim was most discordant with its insistent dot-dot-dot-dot, and over the depths below, the prolonged swish and swirl of the bullets sounded disturbing and uncanny. The Boers again made off and did not reappear.

We subsequently heard that a convoy from Hammonia, on the way north to Klip Nek Camp, had been attacked by a party of about fifty of the enemy, just south, or slightly west of south, of our position. Its rear guard was attacked, and it was at that moment that Brune caused the Maxim to open fire.

I was made stable guard with Heenan, Davis, Caldwell, Cholmeley, Green, and Thornton. Guard was divided into three guards of two hours on and two hours off. I did seven hours watch this night. It was a very bright moonlight night, and it soon became frosty. We rather expected to be sniped, but except that the horses (66 horses) were very restless, for want of sufficient food, nothing happened. The remainder of the Company slept or guarded on the summit, about three hundred feet above us.

June 14

I was one of the fatigue, of ten men, to water the





MIDDLESEX KORFE. IN ACTION, JUNE, 1900.  
*face page 128.*



MIDDLESEX KORFE, JUNE, 1900.







G. G. GROTT.

Killed in Action, June 13, 1900.



G. A. RHODES.

Killed in Action, November 6, 1900.

horses. We did it in shifts of ten horses at a time, as it was not thought advisable to take all the horses at once. There was no water nearer than the water-holes of a spruit a mile to the west, towards Klip Nek, the same spruit, only higher up, as that in which I had done my washing.

The water-holes were frozen over a half an inch thick, and at first it was difficult to get the horses to drink at all. I rode every shift, seven in all, which made over fifteen miles altogether.

This morning a Kaffir rode in from the Boer lines to say that poor young Grout had been killed; he was shot through the femoral artery and died instantly: that Banks, who had been shot through the left lung, close to the heart (touching the heart, it was afterwards said by the surgeon), would die if immediate help were not sent: that Harmer was shot through the leg.

In the afternoon, having finished my guard and fatigue, I returned to the summit of the kopje with the rest of the relieved stable guard, and we were allowed to rest for the remainder of the day, and until the next morning. C. Grout was much cut up about his brother's death, but bore up manfully. He was ordered to Klip Nek in the afternoon, where he attended the funeral. The boys greatly resembled each other.

Groome told me that there had been a good deal of sniping at our men on the top of the kopje to-day, and that three men who had been sent out to scout were driven in, on our east picket, which was also sniped.

Newnham, the new officer, will be very popular with the men, his attitude is so very considerate and calm. His methods are an intense relief to us all.

When he saw, yesterday, that some of us were hot and thirsty he immediately handed round his own water-bottle. He is an officer of the VI. Bengal Cavalry, and is come to be Lieutenant of our Section II. At nightfall about seventy of the Derbys, under Major Dugdale, joined us,



by way of reinforcements. Dugdale, being senior officer, took command of the forces on the kopje. There were three vedette and Cossack posts put on the tableland towards the east.

Our wounded men were given up by the Boers and taken by ambulance to Klip Nek, whence, I heard, they were to be taken to Senekal.

We were terribly short of rations. Newnham soon found out how short we really were, and from his own store gave us each a biscuit that night. This was a Godsend indeed!

We saw Boers two or three times to-day—to the east, in the distance; they were watering horses.

Grumley and Izard went into Klip Nek Camp with the Company waggon, for supplies and kits, but as there was only limited room in the waggon we are very short of everything.

The enemy shot at a small patrol sent out to-day, but no injury was done.

June 16.

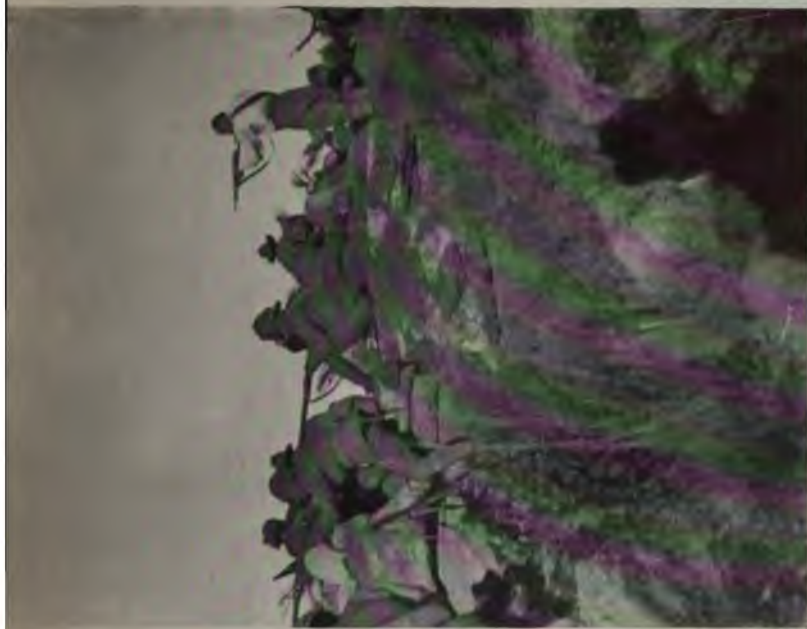
We rose this morning long before daybreak. I slept on the kopje top. We had a quiet night. We rose to no breakfast, no groceries having been drawn yesterday. Mr. Brune ordered some chicken to be boiled down into soup to take the place of our ration of tea or coffee. This we got between nine and ten o'clock. The waggon and "cook house" is at the foot of the kopje, the dixies are brought up with much labour, and that work is now reckoned a fatigue. The kopje is at least 250 feet high, and very rocky and steep.

At sunrise three or four Boers were seen at a farm a mile north-east of us (the one where I procured bread and butter on June 3rd), and ten of our men volunteered to go and try to stalk them. Dugdale forbade their going, although Brune was very anxious for them to go. I was so cramped with the cold that I did not venture to volunteer. I felt I should be useless. Had I known, however, that it had been Newnham's desire and intention to lead the party I should have made an extra effort. It



THE MAXIM IN ACTION. MIDDLESEX KORPE, JUNE, 1900.

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MIDDLESEX KORPE, JUNE, 1900.



all came to nothing. Shortly after, we sighted about fifty mounted Boers towards the east, on the mesa. After breakfast we saw a Cape cart coming from a south-easterly direction, where the Boer laager is situated, and as it neared our position, in the road below, we ordered it to halt. Then a Boer unfurled a large white flag, and we found that he and a companion had a pass to camp. They were allowed to proceed to Klip Nek.

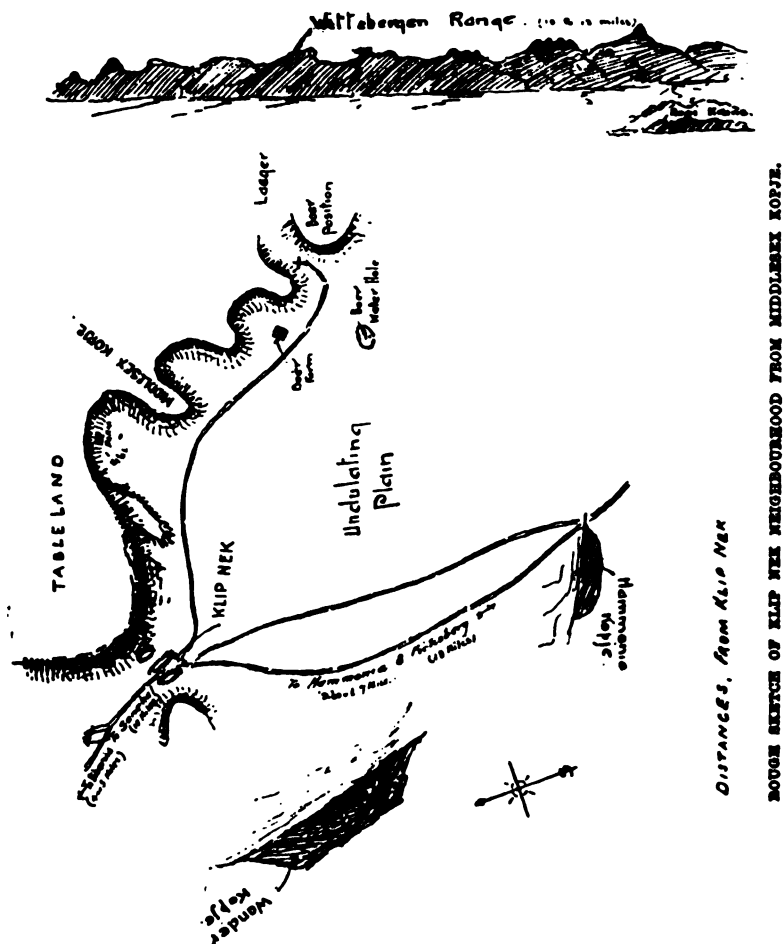
The weather is exquisitely fine, and cool on the kopje top, but at night it is cold, with very hard white frosts towards morning.

We signalled with flags to Klip Nek Camp. Canny operated; Klip Nek replied by helio. It was rumoured that Roberts, Buller, and Methuen and other Generals were hammering the Boers far to the north and south-east, &c., and that they would probably finally close around them with us.

There was a great scramble for our blankets and other kit; some one unstrapped my roll and took my blankets, although they were marked. My waterproof bag was left, it was marked in large letters in green paint.

Late in the afternoon two guns came out on the Hammonia Road, from Klip Nek Camp, and shelled from the south plain the Boer farm, south-east of us. At first it seemed as if they were trying to get into range of some of our own pickets, and Palmer was sent out in all haste to warn the artillery. He galloped at a tremendous pace from the base of our kopje, across the plain. A half-mile out his horse stepped into a hole and threw him headlong, horse and rider rolling over. We watched him, with the keenest interest, remounting, as if nothing untoward had happened, and galloping on to the guns' position. Immediately after we saw some splendid shooting, every shell pitched in and about the farm, and the Boers escaped, one by one, from the house, to their kloof or laager valley. We watched the firing from the north flank of its range, and could time every projectile, from the flash of the gun to the puff of the exploding shell. I do not know what execution was done, we were too far off to see that.

My principal duty, to-day, was watering the horses; it was a long job for about ten of us. At night I again slept on the top of the kopje. I had to satisfy myself with a



couple of old blankets. We slept by our arms, among the rocks, or in the shelter of sangars. Our kits are despoiled and rendered rather promiscuous-like. I am using an old pea-soup tin for a mess tin.

† Grout was killed here June 18, 1900. Harmer and Banks were wounded.





"TIRED OUT." MIDDLESEX KOPJE, JUNE, 1900.

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IN ACTION, JUNE, 1900.



## CHAPTER X

### TO FICKSBURG

**WE** got early orders to saddle up, and be ready to move to Hammonia. Boers appeared on the east table-land, and we were sniped in the early morning. We were ordered out to man the north and east borders of our position.

1900.  
June 16.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

We are now ready, in the cool, bright sunshine, to fire volleys at the enemy should he attempt to make a demonstration. Our fellows are quietly talking about every variety of subject, from Florida orange groves and Bond Street tailors to the meaning of the enormous convoy which is passing far across the veldt plain below, from Klip Nek Camp to Hammonia, on the road midway between our kopje, which we have named Middlesex Kopje, and the great and magnificent berg called Wonder Kop.

We are now under orders to march to Hammonia in the afternoon, and we shall perhaps form a part of the rear guard of the big convoy. We may encounter danger and see fighting before night. Our horses are saddled and in full marching order.

The ever-changing and grand beauty of Wonder Kop is very impressive. The berg is a mighty land-mark and can be seen from points as far as Senekal.

The convoy stretches the full length of road from Klip Nek to Hammonia Kopje; it must be at least a ten-mile convoy.

In the afternoon our Company started as left rear guard.

Napier was ordered by Brune to pick six men for left rear scouts for the Company. Napier chose me for one; besides, there were Palmer, Groome, Lunn and Gibbons. We rode in single file, extended about five horses' length apart. There was no use in our riding well within range of the kopjes to our left, which were known to be the edge of the Boer position, east, but we were ordered to do so by the O.C. and we did it. We were over two miles from the convoy, and within a few hundred yards of the ridges, and as we rode along at about two and a half to three miles an hour our friends the enemy fired at us from the heights. We could not see these sharpshooters, but the ping pong, or tock kok of the Mauser and the "sswewing" of passing bullets and the puffs and ploughing of them as they struck the earth around us were unpleasantly apparent. Once, Lunn's horse, just in front of me, took a leap forward, being either frightened or just nipped by a bullet. About half-way to Hammonia the firing ceased, and the sky was becoming overcast. Near Hammonia I lighted upon a Kaffir kraal all alive with dusky figures disturbed by the stir of the movement of the troops. I bought my helmetful of eggs for two shillings, and managed to canter into camp with them, hugging my helmet tight. It was just dusk now and beginning to rain, a steady, chill drizzle. I was warned for night guard. The guard slept together in a row between the horse lines. I was second relief. Blount and Kelsey were also on this guard. We all got very wet and cold. I managed to procure a little dry fuel and some dry dung in a sack, and with some difficulty built a fire, which we had to watch constantly. The persistent drizzle dampened its ardour, but such as it was it was a great comfort.

June 17,  
Sunday.

We rose at daylight in view of quite a large camp which was scattered about the hollows and rises at the foot of the big bergs at Hammonia. The rain held off for an hour or two. About nine or ten o'clock 34th Company were ordered out to scout the great hills to the right, in the direction of Ficksburg. We were under



Newnham, and he again stretched us out in extended files, parallel with and on the right flank of the small convoy for which we were scouting. We rode in double files. Spruits were swollen, and the approaches to the drifts were slippery and difficult, so that about two miles from camp we had a long, tiresome delay in a steady downpour of cold rain. We were ordered to remain in the saddle and to watch carefully. This was not such simple work, for the poor, weary, shivering horses would veer round, tail to the drifting wet, with pathetic persistence, and a turn of one's head caused a chill trickle down one's neck. Our overcoats got soaked, but not too heavy to resist the gusts of wind which drove discomfort to knees and seat. After a while we saw that our fifteen-pounder and waggons had succeeded in crossing the drift, and again we pressed forward in the rain. This journey to Ficksburg was a mixture of extreme discomfort from rain, bitter cold, and hunger, and a feast of magnificent scenery, wild, rugged, and of the gorge and kopje type. Here and there were narrow, fertile valleys and kloofs with cultivated fields; slopes, and hillsides covered with rich grass, lands evidently suitable for wheat growing. These more abrupt and closely bunched hills are the foothills and outposts of the distant higher ranges on the east side of the Caledon River, which are the landmarks of Basutoland. It must be constantly borne in mind that, with the exception of the comparatively few planted trees—principally the various species of Australian gum-trees, willow-trees, firs, and peach orchards, all in the precincts of widely-scattered farms and homesteads—the country is quite treeless. In some of the narrower and sheltered kloofs, running down from kopje tops, a very sparse, dwarf, dark green scrub is found; for the rest of the view it is endless vistas of grass, of khaki tints in winter time, of emerald green in the spring and early summer. Khaki tints prevail for the greater part of the year.

In the afternoon we wound through the pass or nek of



Willow Grange into the Ficksburg plain. On emerging from the pass we halted at the farm at the right of the road about three or four miles from Ficksburg. We were ravenous by this time, and we besieged the house. The doors were closed against us, but a small window was opened, and the old Boer proprietor and his women served us with hot coffee and slices of bread and lard, a shilling a time; we came again as our luck allowed us to fight our way to the window. It was a sight to behold how selfish men may become under such circumstances! At such times, the rules governing the law of the survival of the fittest—whether of the order of cunning or physical force—have full play, and if, by way of astonishing contrast, a comrade comes out of the press with a steaming cup, and offers it with shaky hand to a less lucky anxious friend, with a remark that he has “really had enough,” the man is very likely to reply, “You’re a damned liar, old chap, but I’ll take your coffee!”

Some officers were taking their ease on the front verandah, but the troopers and horses were in the rain, dripping, tired, and sodden, and after all we got only enough to sharpen our hunger. There were a couple of oat forage ricks on the left of the road, and most of us took our horses there, to give them a chance.

Just before sunset we were ordered to trot towards Ficksburg. We rode into that little town as it was getting dark. Once in the main street our Section seemed to melt, for the men were famishing, camp had not been established, no one seemed to know in which direction it was to be pitched, there was a good outlook for loaves, and, in spite of the claims of discipline, all eagerly foraged around for bread. In the meantime it became quite dark; the main guard passed on to the camp, which occupied a position to the south-east of town. I had promised to wait for Kelsey, and he was so long at a baker’s house that it was densely dark before he rejoined me. We now made a desperate attempt to find camp, got on to the wrong road, fell into dongas and pickets, and with

many conflicting directions we wound up by finding, on a kopje side, the camp of the Border Horse, ninety strong. They had tents, and looked wonderfully comfortable after our experiences of the day; in the hearty manner of Colonials they desired us to stay. We said we would make one more effort, by their directions. For half an hour we struggled over kopje and spruit, getting more and more out of town, until I made up my mind that it was quite time for us to return to the Border Horse. Kelsey reluctantly followed me. We were cordially welcomed by a tentful of Australian boys. We were able to make some coffee, which we greatly enjoyed with the bread we had bought. We turned in wet, but comforted, ten in a tent, and for an hour we yarned of prize fighting, the care of horses, racing, the war, and the fun of travelling. This was the first time I had slept under cover for two months—since we detrained at Norval's Pont.

An anniversary of Waterloo—the first I have regarded June 18.  
from a soldier's point of view !

Kelsey and I found camp, not far off, very early in the morning. We slipped into the lines, before reveille, and explained our trouble to Sergeant Napier, who kindly set us right with Mr. Newnham. We soon heard our cannon booming to the east, bombarding a Boer position. We afterwards found that some of the firing was by the Boers, that they had fired half a dozen shells into the Manchester camp. Two patrols from our Company were sent out on the roads, but as I was warned for afternoon stable guard I was not chosen for either, but in the evening a special order, from General Boyes, came to Mr. Newnham, to get together all the available men of 34th and the 33rd East Kents, thirty-two men in all—there were only seven of our men in camp—and to hasten out on a south road (to Victoria Mills, on the " Mill Spruit "). We knew, at the time of starting, nothing of the purport of our journey, nor indeed that there were any mills there, until the next morning. We were ordered to keep absolute silence, to march on the

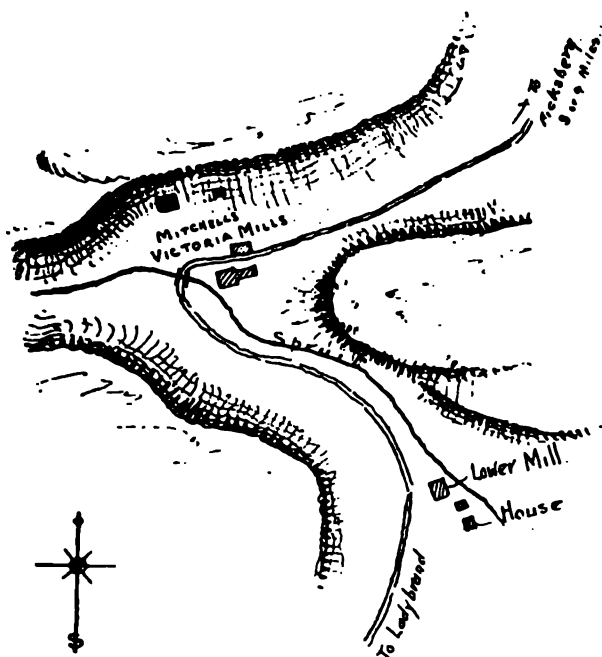
grass, where possible, instead of on the roadway. No matches were to be struck. Smoking was prohibited, and interesting instructions were given to us in case of attack. The ride out, in the cool, clear starlight, under such restraint, made the journey seem mysterious, and longer than it really was. We arrived at our destination about ten o'clock, halting in a narrow, intensely dark defile; great kopjes towered about us on every hand, against the starry sky. We could make out the dim outlines of buildings, and saw the flickering of candle-light in a house on a slope above us. Mr. Newnham quickly and silently divided us into pickets and guards for kopjes, roads, and a bridge over the spruit. It fell to my lot to be one of the six stable guards, and I did four hours' watch. The linked, hungry horses gave us the greatest trouble, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the stable guard could keep them in line or prevent them from encroaching on the space allotted to the sleeping men. Sleep was next to impossible—the ground was wet and hard, we were picketing on the roadway, it was very cold, and, until the moon rose, it was as dark as a bag. We only spoke to each other in whispers. We were told that an attack, or a passage of Boers and a convoy, was expected each moment. Shortly after daylight a small English convoy came through and passed on into Ficksburg.

June 19.

Daylight threw a brighter complexion on our surroundings. The ends of three great kopjes formed a sort of triangular basin or pass of about two hundred acres.

The main mill is a four-storey, well-built, dressed stone building. The machinery is English, modern, and I should judge first-class, all very clean, orderly, and neat. There was a dynamo for electric lighting. When the manager of the mill came down from his house, in the early morning, we thought he was a well-to-do Boer. He had a long, bushy beard, and was heavily built. To me there was something strangely familiar in his speech, and I immediately said, "Well, well, where *did* you come

from?" He answered, "Somerset." "So do I," said I. "I was born at Wellington," said he. "So was I," said I. "The world is very small." "That's so." His brother, he said, was an employé in Fox Bros.' serge and blanket factory. I said I was wearing a pair of their patent putties sent to me by my brother. He knew my people, he said, and would I go up and talk to his wife, who was just hungering for Wellington news? I walked



into a cosy little room hung about with home scenes and views, our old Parish Church, the Blackdowns, and the Duke's Monument. On seeing Mrs. Challis, I ventured, "Wull, how bee 'ee, Mrs. Challis? I've a commed over vrum Wullint'n to zee 'ee." The good wife turned round laughing, with, "Ah, now I know you come from Wellington, sure enough!"

A great deal of business was evidently done at these

mills—much grinding of mealies and wheat. A great deal of the wheat was coming from Basutoland—a rich wheat country. The mills are the property of Mr. Mitchell, a man of some wealth in Ficksburg. The upper mill is managed by Mr. Challis, and the lower by his son-in-law. It was a lenient sort of warfare that allowed these mills to be running in full swing. I saw Dutch waggons with twelve mules each, and several Basuto servants packing thirty sacks on each waggon. Mr. Challis bobbed actively about with his great black beard, handling and causing to be handled, very deftly, the sacks of flour and meal. The work was done with rapidity.

The roofs of the buildings were of the corrugated galvanised iron that is used so much throughout the South African colonies for roofing and siding. The few trees about were planted by the Challises. The mill possessed, unmolested, horses, mules, pigs, geese, fowls, and guinea-fowls. The kopjes were rich in grass, but rocky and precipitous. The Challises had electric light and telephone connections from the mill to their house. The bridge was an iron cantilever and truss one, with a cement roadway and stone abutments.

Some rations of mutton, tea, and sugar, were forwarded from camp in the East Kent cart. Davis volunteered to cook for our seven men. The Kents cooked for themselves. Davis did us proud, he was an old hand at it, having formerly been in the Canadian Police. He cooked mutton chops, "hot biscuit," eggs and bacon, and he brewed tea, and we had brought bread in our wallets. For firewood we used the jambs of the doors of a deserted hut beyond the bridge. Napier shouted out in his glee, "By Jove, boys, we're living like fighting cocks!" Thus we are living in over plenty, or near to starvation, as occasion demands. We like Newnham the more and more we see of him and his ways. He, with Napier and some of his men (I was still on stable guard) constructed sangars near the bridge. In his shirt-sleeves he worked



like a Trojan for hours, until, utterly tired out, he sat down on a doorstep and slept for half an hour. He not only directs, but works himself, with hands as well as head. He loopholed the outhouses, and constantly visited the posts. He never fails to look after the welfare of his men.

I understand that the 35th Company are now at Hammonia, and the rest of 34th are in Ficksburg Camp—having patrols of roads to do. We have heard the noise of cannonading all the morning.

Our horses are linked and saddled, in marching order, just before the main mill. Mr. Newnham keeps us all alert (2.30 p.m.), we hardly know which to expect first—a relief, marching troops, convoys, or attack.

About four o'clock Mr. Newnham came to me and said, "You have a good horse, Corner; ride out on the Ladybrand Road (south) and see if you can see anything of some artillery coming this way." This was the first hint to us as to why we had taken and held the pass. In two minutes I was over the bridge and galloping briskly up the pass. My little mare was glad to be free once more, and moved with a spring. About three miles out I caught sight of a khaki advance guard, and soon found that a couple of guns and a guard were coming our way. I reported to the O.C. and told him the mill pass was held, and the distance it was to Ficksburg. He seemed pleased at the near ending of a long trek. I galloped back and reported to Mr. Newnham. By this a company of Border Horse had come to the Mill to relieve us, and Mr. Newnham told us to get ready at once to join the approaching artillery. We bought from Mr. Challis some mealie meal for porridge and some eggs and bacon. I fear we had first pickings as to eggs, sugar, &c., but the Border Horse would get plenty of mealie meal, bacon, and pork. Six young geese, bought by Newnham and Napier, were a part of the booty which we tied to our saddles. Napier gave me a goose to carry, and Mr. Newnham gave me his nosebag to bring in. The geese

were divided—one for Mr. Newnham, one for our 34th men, and four for the East Kents. I ran up to the house to say goodbye to the Challises, and when I came back to my mare the goose I was to carry, Mr. Newnham's nose-bag and feed, and the throat-lash of my bridle had all disappeared. I was obliged to report the matter to Mr. Newnham. It was now too dark to identify anything, but as we rode home as rearguard Mr. Newnham discoursed pleasantly of the culprit, so that all could hear, and advised restitution. This little habit goes by the polite name of "commandeering," or "pinching," among some of the less particular troopers. We got into Ficksburg after dark, and went straight to camp; the weather was very threatening.

June 20.

A heavy thunderstorm broke over Ficksburg last night. We were all soaked again, especially the night guard. I was thankful for that waterproof bag \* which Green gave me.

At reveille I went up to the East Kent lines, and after a good deal of persuasion got them to disgorge the nosebag and goose, but I did not get my strap. There was cannon fire, intermittently, all day, apparently English and Boers answering each other. We were kept busy drying our soaked kit in the sun. It was a quiet day. I was warned for night guard. It still looked heavy for rain, and the men of our Section tried to make temporary blanket tents, in anticipation of another night like the last. We watered our horses at the drift of the Caledon River, which river is the boundary of Basutoland. I led three horses there this morning. The river was much swollen and the current swift, and what with lack of room, current, and nervous horses, it was not an easy watering. I felt very sorry for Davern to-day; he takes more care of his mount than any man in the line, and his mare, of which he is very fond, was taken ill. The sickness was evidently due to a chill, and the wet weather coming at a time when

\* Sergeant Green presented one to each of the men of our Section at Knightsbridge.

only bad food—an inferior quality of mealies—could be obtained in the lines. The mealies, instead of digesting, simply swelled in her guts.\* I cannot understand the short-sighted policy of our authorities of using mealies, when oats are abundant throughout this district.

Oppe, of the gun section, was looking ill to-day, and had to go into hospital for dysentery and fever. Groome gave me two *Times* weekly edition, the first news I have had for many weeks. Here rations are pretty plentiful, and we are able to buy a few luxuries at the stores. The Boer householder also is not above making for us, for a consideration, sweetcakes and small jam turnovers as well as bread.

My helmet was like pulp this morning after the storm, and I had to give it a day's sun-baking. The campaign is telling dreadfully on our clothes. Some of us are mere tramps, with sleeveless tunics and kneeless breeches.†

Firs, willows, poplars, gums, and eucalyptus, peach orchards, thick hedges of quince and other fruit trees are the principal trees in and immediately around the town—all have been planted within the last twenty-five or thirty years. The houses are scattered, and the streets well laid out in regular blocks on the slope which runs back from the Caledon river-bank to the foot of the precipitous heights of the great Imperani Berg.

This morning we were ordered to fall in to listen to a disagreeable lecture about our lack of latrines. What is everybody's business is nobody's business. The direction of wrath ought not to have been towards the men, but towards those whose duty it was to order latrine fatigues.

The snow still lies on the summits of the Maluti range

\* The mare died next morning, much to Davern's grief. It was the same mare that he rode on that long ride with me to Ferreira Farm, on May 25th.

† The friction of our knees against the saddle wallets very quickly wore out our breeches.

in Basutoland. The mountain scenery is beautiful here. The blues, whites, and purples mingle in vivid contrast. The air is fresh, cool, and damp to-day. It is suggested that the cannonading brings rain.

There are twenty-four horses in Section II. lines and twenty-six in Section I.; besides these there are waggon horses and the horses of the officers and their servants.

One of our cleanest comrades found a louse in his body-belt to-day, and his disgust and consternation was very funny. He talked wildly of going home, or drowning himself!—says he brought them from hospital. Is this a case where it were best not to look for—trouble?

line 21.

The East Kents and others went out from camp before 4 a.m., in the dark. I was on guard at the time, and I watched them saddling. I don't know where they went. It was the coldest night we have had—a very hard, white frost. I used my numnah for a pillow, and the frost made a white hoar ring around my head on the numnah, and my beard and moustache were frozen stiff.

At reveille I was ordered to report myself at the Ficksburg Post Office at 7.30 a.m. for telegraph orderly duty. The Post Office is in line with a group of public buildings in the centre of the town. These buildings have recently been entrenched about and fortified with sandbags, so as to enclose a fairly large laager space. The entrances to this enclosure are built of thick sod walls, and so constructed as to form an **S** entrance. The Boers say that they entrenched the place upon their receiving news that Jonathan, the Basuto chief, was likely to invade their territory; one of their little diplomatic subterfuges. The trenches are well constructed. The sandbags were added by the Manchester Infantry. Wattle, poplar, and fir-trees are planted about this public property.

By 8 a.m. I had reported to Private Bryant, the telegraph operator at the Post Office. I picketed my horse in the front yard, and got a chance to examine Ficksburg

from a central point of view. The town had several thriving stores, one just opposite the Post Office kept by Mr. Mitchell, the owner of the Victoria Mills. It was a more attractive town in many respects than most colonial border towns. It boasted more trees, a plentiful supply of good water in pipes, a good bank building, churches, schools, a circulating library, hotel, and billiard-room. I took dinner at the hotel, an excellent meal for 2s. 6d. Many officers and civilians were at the table. I drew forage and rations from the new O.R.C. Police, and bought a pair of breeches from a member of that body. I noted a large number of Boers, free to come and go, about the public buildings. I slept for the first time in the O.R.C. under a roof.

I rose at 6 a.m., and one of the Stafford Tommies June 22. helped me to cook a breakfast. The delayed civilian mail came in from Thlotse, Basutoland, and with it came the newly-appointed Postmaster. I had a very quiet day, so I copied the proclamations on the Court House doors. By the afternoon it seemed as if I had been a great while from my Company. I saw Napier, Phillips, Meikle, Fowler, and Anderson in town to-day. The latter told me that the Boers had fired a cannon shot at him this morning as he was taking a message to some camp. Thirty-fourth Company have changed camping-grounds to the other side of town.

V. R.

#### PROCLAMATION.

In future no persons are to be allowed to ride, except officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Imperial Army and those connected with it.

Those transgressing this rule are to have their horses confiscated.

Given under my hand at Bloemfontein this 30th day of April, 1900.

ROBERTS,

Field Marshal.

(In block letter.)

(Also in the Dutch language.)

Curling, Printer, Bloemfontein.



## 146 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

### NOTICE.

It is notified for general information that no stock cattle or food stuffs are to be sent out of the Orange River Colony without special permission.

(Signed) F. WHITE, Major,  
District Commissioner.

FICKSBURG,  
June, 1900.

(Typewritten.)

### FOUND.

A Fox Terrier. Owner can have it by sending description to O.C. Yeomanry Harmonia (*sic.*).  
(Typewritten.)

### NOTICE.

All persons in possession of Riding Horses, Light Vehicles, Saddles, and Harness are to register these without delay.

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Fire Arms of every description, Ammunition, and Explosives are to be surrendered. Any concealment of Arms, &c., will be severely dealt with.

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All Orange Free State or Transvaal Flags are to be immediately surrendered.

Also any property, clothing, accoutrement of British troops.

(Signed) J. WHITE, Major,  
District Commissioner.

FICKSBURG,  
June, 1900.

(Typewritten.)

### PUBLIC NOTICE.

(1) In case of alarm the Curfew Bell will ring for one minute. All civilians are to at once return to and keep in their houses; if after dark all lights in civilian houses to be put out.

(2) From 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. All persons are to be in their houses, and any persons found in the streets will be arrested.

N. O. HALDANE, Lieut.,  
O.C. Police,  
For District Commissioner.

FICKSBURG,  
June 19, 1900.

(Typewritten.)

## NOTICE.

All goods, cattle, &c., commandeered on behalf of the Orange Free State Government and not in possession of the lawful owner must immediately be handed over to the Assistant Provost-Marshal at Bloemfontein or the nearest Military Authority. Those failing to comply with this order, will on discovery be severely dealt with by a Military Court.

By order,

B. BURNETT-HITCHCOCK, Capt.,  
Assistant Provost-Marshal.

BLOEMFONTEIN,

May 15, 1900.

(Printed Notice. Also in the Dutch tongue.)

R. Curling, Printer.

## NOTICE.

The following are the Market Prices:—

Milk	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6d. per quart
Eggs	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2/- per doz.
Fowls (Fat)...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1/6 each
Ducks (Fat)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2/- each
Turkeys	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4/- to 8/- each
Butter	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2/- per pound
Bread	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	8d. per pound
Meal	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3/- per 25 pounds
Mealies	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	18/- a sack

Any persons contravening the above prices will be liable to a penalty.

By Order of District Commissioner,

H. V. HALDANE, Lt.,

O.C. Police.

FICKSBURG,

June, 1900.

## PROCLAMATION.

Any inhabitants failing to give notice of any Boer Commando assembling or hostile movements of any kind taking place in their neighbourhood will be treated with utmost severity and will be liable to have their farms burnt and stock confiscated. Should any part of the Railway Line in the Orange River Colony be damaged maliciously the nearest farms will be similarly treated.

By order,

(Signed)

F. WHITE, Major,  
District Commissioner.

FICKSBURG,

June 16, 1900.

(Typewritten.)

148 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

NOTICE.

No persons are to leave the Town of Ficksburg without a Pass.  
In the event of any firing taking place the inhabitants are to remain  
in their houses.

H. V. HALDANE, Lt.,  
O.C. Police,  
For District Commissioner.

FICKSBURG,  
*June 14, 1900.*

(Typewritten.)

NOTICE.

All rifles, guns, revolvers, and weapons of whatsoever kind and all  
ammunition in the township of Ficksburg are to be handed in at the  
Court House, Ficksburg, before 4 p.m. 28th May, 1900.

All horses, saddles, and bridles to be sent in by 4 p.m. 28th May,  
1900.

Any one found in possession of Arms after above-mentioned time  
will be severely dealt with.

By Order,  
General BRABANT.

WM. GODDARD, Captain.

FICKSBURG,  
*May 28, 1900.*

(Handwritten.)

NOTICE.

Until further Notice no services will take place in the various  
Churches in Ficksburg after dark.

Service will take place in the English Church for the benefit of the  
troops at 7 p.m. on Sundays.

By Order of the  
DISTRICT COMMISSIONER.

FICKSBURG,  
*June, 1900.*

(Typewritten.)

NOTICE.

No schools to be carried on without special permission.

By Order of the  
DISTRICT COMMISSIONER.

FICKSBURG,  
*June 18, 1900.*

## NOTICE.

Any persons cutting down trees in the town of Ficksburg without permission will be severely dealt with.

By Order of the

DISTRICT COMMISSIONER.

FICKSBURG,

June 20, 1900.

(Typewritten.)

Bryant gave me three telegrams to deliver—one to June 23.  
Major Ashton of the Intelligence Department; one to the Town Commandant, Major Stewart of the Staffords; and one to Lieutenant Brownlee of the Kaffrarian Rifles. I delivered the first two, and then found that Lieutenant Brownlee was at the camp at Willow Grange, about six miles on the road to Hammonia. The camp was high up on the kopje range on the right of the road beyond the Willow Grange Pass. The Lieutenant and his men were engaged with the enemy over the hills—the man in charge of the camp did not know exactly where. Rifle fire could be heard and an occasional Boer cannon-shot from Zout Kop.

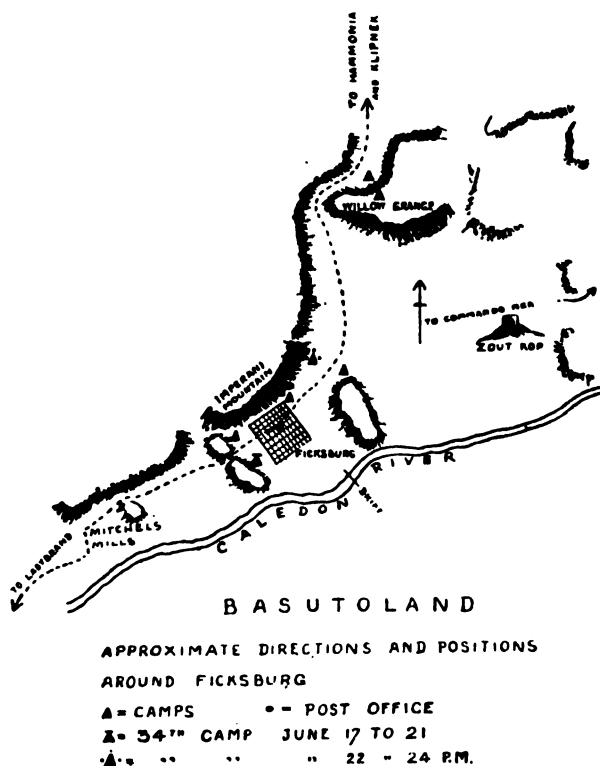
I left the telegram at his tent and returned safely at 1.30 p.m. On the way home there were sounds of considerable firing from the left, east. Boer positions were not far off. An orderly told me that the day before the Boers had nearly pinked him with a shell from Zout Kop on this road.

I called at 34th Camp and drew my rations of meat and coffee. In town I heard that a convoy had just come in from Basutoland, with fresh supplies of jams, treacle, biscuits, and cigarettes, all for sale at more reasonable prices than usual. I trotted back to 34th Camp with the information, and the boys asked me to buy two or three pounds' worth of groceries for them. It was a great treat to them. I returned to the Post Office at 6.30.

Bryant said that I was not supposed to deliver private telegrams to camps outside of town, that I ought to have returned with the message when I found that Lieutenant Brownlee was not in town.

June 24.  
Sunday.

I had a quiet, lazy morning. Barton came down to get three additional tins of treacle. The store was closed, on account of Sunday, but we managed to find the owner. I took dinner at the quarters of Sergeant Garnham of the O.R.C. Police. I was astonished at the better rations of these men. It was the first square soldier's meal I had had for a long time; I was treated to kidney, bacon, beef,



tea, bread-and-butter, &c.—all this on a white table-cloth and in a house!—An Australian settler and old Shrewsbury Grammar School boy, did the honours of the table. I met, strangely enough, the son-in-law of an old gentleman of South Wales whom I knew years ago, and we had a talk over recent history in that neighbourhood. In the afternoon a church service was held next door in the



Town Hall, which is now the general hospital. The hymn music sounded familiar and as an echo of a home life that was far from us. A piano did service for lack of a more sonorous instrument. This morning I saw many civilians going to church in best bib and tucker, prayer-book in hand, "all the same as in the old country."

I entered into conversation with a tall, solemn-looking Boer that I had seen loafing about the square for the past day or two. He said he was a refugee, and that he had received threatening letters and notices from Boer commandants saying that he would be shot if he did not return at once to his commando to fight. I asked him what he purposed doing, and he said that if the English evacuated Ficksburg he should either go with them or cross into Basutoland.

## CHAPTER XI

### BACK TO KLIP DRIFT NEK

1900.  
June 24,  
Sunday.

IN the afternoon I heard a rumour that our Company were marching out at night. I rode up to Big Boulder Camp and found that the information was accurate, that orders were out for a march at midnight. I returned at once to the Post Office to pack my kit, for I had no mind to part with my Company. I wrote a few letters home. I did not know when I might again be near a Post Office. I was occupied in letter writing when Kelsey galloped down to tell me that the hour had been changed, that we were to start at nine o'clock. It was almost that hour then, and we rode out into the darkness as fast as we could, and found at the camping-place that the column had already started a good ten minutes. All must have been done in a hurry, for belated Cape-cart drivers and officers' servants were screaming at each other out of the dark. We pushed on, overtook the column in a few minutes, and soon found our comrades.

Before approaching Willow Grange Pass our Company was rearranged into dismounted guards for the convoy and mounted leaders of horses. I was one of twenty of the foot-guards under Corporal Green; Kelsey led my horse. The march was continued in silence and in dense darkness. The stars were brilliant and twinkling, there was no moon. We were in the shadows of the high cliffs, and of the kopjes of defiles and passes. The dark outlines of the lofty escarpments and cañon crags to our left, as we neared Hammonia, cast a weird and dim

solemnity over our progress. After midnight it became intensely cold with hoar frost; the breath froze at our very lips, my beard and moustache were stiff with ice. The riders with led horses requested to be allowed to walk, for so keen was the cold that it was positively painful to be still, or to be in the saddle. Slowly we trudged along for weary hours, at first in silence, and later, when the chief danger of molestation was passed, talking and laughing. We had been ordered to maintain silence along by Willow Grange, but that restraint could have been of little help to us, for, not to mention the fact that a sergeant let off his rifle by accident in a defile, awaking thereby the echoes with its sharp crack and whistling bullet, there were ten or a dozen ox-waggons in our convoy, and difficult drifts to cross. At any point the harsh, imprecating screams of the Kaffir drivers, their shrill whistling, the deadly swish and pistol-like crack of their long whips, the rumble of waggons, and the creak of brakes would have discovered a moving convoy to any living soul from Ficksburg to Hammonia. It was a most memorable midsummer night's dream!

We reached the south side of Hammonia at about four o'clock in the morning, when a halt was called. The advance guard was composed of Section I., and the Company waggon was with them, and they, not hearing the order, passed on about two miles to the Klip Drift side of Hammonia camping-grounds. Section II. was left in the rear to wait and to swear. The officers proceeded, and for an hour or two we were left with nothing to do and nothing to eat, in the coldest part of the night, horse and man chilled to the marrow. If anything could have warmed the men it would have been the suppressed rage they were in. There was some bitter and very ugly talking, and the rankest mutiny was bandied about. It was certainly hard to bear such careless neglect with a patient spirit. We watched with straining eyes, from the rise on which we had halted, for the first flicker of dawn. I shall always remember the joyous

June 24 and 25.

comfort that the sudden appearance of the Pleiades, just above the skyline, on a steely cold and rapidly lighting horizon, seemed to bring to me. It was something familiar—a home constellation.

I fear that an officer's inability to endure with fortitude the ordeal of the night had much to do with this needless infliction. Had there been any attack the utmost disorder must have prevailed, and disaster must inevitably have followed. It was a fearfully mismanaged affair, and the officer responsible deserved the strongest censure. Daylight came at last, and with it Newnham bringing —, who, it appeared, had found Section I. and had spent the long interval by a fire at the waggon. The servants and the drivers of the two or three precious Cape carts over which we had been standing guard had wrapped themselves up and gone to sleep, and with some difficulty they were awakened. Then it was found that the harnessed horses and mules were so frozen and weary that they could not be got to move. Newnham, always alert and active, called upon a half a dozen of us to leave our horses and help the poor beasts in the carts. It was the servant's office to remain on his box and belabour his team. With infinite trouble and patience we got them on the move at last. Between the Captain and our Section there were strained relations, and the men were in no temper either to choose soft words or their manner of reply. There was not a man there who would not at Newnham's order have guarded any trust with his life; but they had no use for mere spite, and they showed it.

We rejoined the lost Section, loosened girths, and fed our horses. My mare was ravenous, and ate in such haste as was pitiful to see. For the men there were no rations, not even the coffee that would have been so acceptable and that would have been like oil on troubled waters. There was a fire, and water was brought up from a distance with much labour, why *our* coffee was not forthcoming we could not discover; coffee was going among the men about the waggons, that is certain.



Fortunately some of the men had in their wallets some scraps of bread and some treacle, bought at Ficksburg, and a few managed to get a mouthful.\*

The redeeming feature of this march was the unfailing activity of Newnham. If there was a wheel stuck, his exemplary shoulder was at it as soon as any one's. Now and then he threw out an encouraging word or a good-natured rallying gibe. We all liked him very much. June 24-25.

We "saddled up" almost immediately, and our Section under Newnham was made right flank guard; I was one of three (Tomlinson and Meikle were the others) under Napier, for the outer, right scouts. Newnham constantly rode to and fro and made us scout far out to the right, but we were not shot at from the ridges as we were on June 16th. We scouted past Middlesex Kopje and on into Klip Drift Camp, where we arrived at 10.30 a.m. We were all allowed to rest for the remainder of the day, for which we were thankful, for we had got through thirty hours of work. June 25.

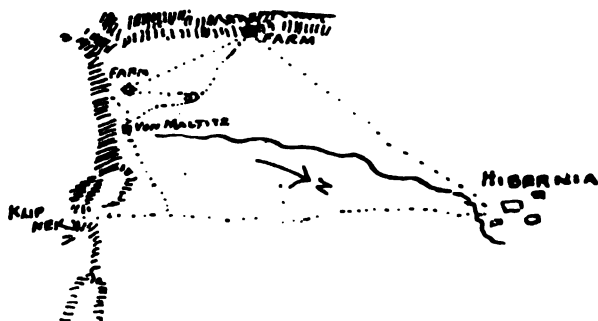
This morning Napier and seven of our Section were told off for a foraging expedition in conjunction with some regulars. Napier sent Davis and Blount to scout the Hibernia Road. Lieutenant McCauslin, of the June 26.

\* The following extract from the letter of a returned Yeoman, which appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* of June 26, 1901, is so apropos that it might have been written of our own experiences:—

"I wonder if officers ever realise that it lies in their power to make the lives of their men a little hell, or, if not a paradise, at least a burden easily and cheerfully supported. No subject of the Czar ever depended for his well-being on his master as a man in the ranks does on his officer. Marcella raved at the 'awful needless suffering.' Needless? It is the very keynote to the situation. Tommy does not 'grouse,' as he calls it, at privations which are the exigencies of active service, but at the useless hardships that are the result of want of consideration or downright carelessness which amounts to positive cruelty. After a certain Yeomanry company had made an all-night march in the bitter cold a halt was called at daybreak; with much difficulty water was procured from a spruit over a mile away, and the 'dixey' boiled. The Captain, who was in a temper at losing his Cape cart, gave the order, 'Stand to your horses!' The Lieutenant, who hated to see his men ill-treated, bit his lips to control himself. 'But the men, sir,' said he, 'are just going to have their coffee.' 'Then let the d—d men go without their coffee!'"



Leinsters, with some of his men, took two waggons out on the Hibernia Road. The rest of our men under Napier turned round to the left a little west of south to old Von Maltitz's farm, about two and a half miles from Klip Drift, thence about west to a Kaffir kraal, where Tomlinson bought some bead-work ornaments. I noticed that one young mother, highly prized, as a charm, a long necklace of plaited grass and beads, which she had wound in many coils around her baby's neck. Thence, Napier, Barrington, and Hearne rode south-east to a farm, to see if "oat-hay," or other forage, could be obtained there. Tomlinson and I rode on westward to a big farm up on the slope of the high kopje ridge that bounds this Klip



Nek—Senekal plain on the west and south-west. Shortly afterwards Napier, Barrington and Hearne rejoined us. At this farm there were an old Boer and his wife, a daughter, three or four grown-up sons, and a son's wife. At first they refused to supply anything, but we found oat-hay and firewood in abundance. We bought (always for high prices) bread, lard, and oranges. Of the latter there were several trees laden with ripening fruit. I thought this very remarkable remembering the night frosts, but saw that the northern exposure of the garden and its shelter of high kopjes west and south would account for the crop. The frosts do not seem to penetrate, to any destructive degree, the coombes or small

kloofs with a northern aspect. If any damage of the kind were to be feared it would be from the dry piercing winds from the Maluti Mountains, which now have great patches and fields of snow on them. Napier placed me on guard on the north skyline, and I reported in turn the approach of McCauslin and his waggons and of a small patrol, Phillips and Anderson, under Corporal R. Morgan. I also reported a negro who was on the spy, on the kopje behind the farm. Napier with three of us went up and brought him down. The kopje top was defended by sangars (evidently built for defence, not kraals), and the place was naturally strong in rocky cover. The attitude of the household, if non-committal, was not in the least friendly. It is folly to allow such depositories of stores in a country swarming with the enemy. The waggons took forage, and some gum-tree trunks for firewood. We now scouted in advance of the waggons to Hibernia and bought a few things at Ingram's country stores there, and we got a few loaves of bread from a Scotch woman, Mrs. Carmichael. A batch was just out of the oven; we paid her one shilling per loaf, which was cheap as bread goes now. In Klip Nek Camp we divided all grub obtained, evenly, which is Napier's way, and my share came to 1s. 6d.

At the request of the officer commanding the Leinster- June 27.  
sters, a combined patrol was made to-day towards the north and east. We went out twenty-four strong, under Newnham, to the hill east of camp, between Middlesex Kopje and the high berg north-east of camp, and beyond Artillery Hill. A similar party of Brabant's Horse, from Middlesex Kopje, were patrolling south-east of us. I was one of the left flank scouts, our general direction was north-east on the tableland. The Leinsters and a gun took up a central position between the scouting parties, and halted whilst the scouts advanced.

We soon got into touch with the enemy. We saw a good number of Boers north-east of us, to our direct front. They kept up an irregular fire to the right and

left. On our right they were firing at the Brabants. On our left they fired at three of our Section who had been sent around at the foot of this tableland berg to the left, or west (Kirby, Pyecroft and another). Mr. Newnham hastily wrote a message and ordered me to take it to the officer commanding the Leinsters. He then pluckily pushed out to the extreme left front, and immediately I heard several shots fired in that direction. I delivered the despatch, and the officer commanding sent me to the front again to tell Newnham to retire at once. Our scouts had gone forward so eagerly that it was some time before we were all collected and ready to retire. After rejoining the Leinsters we rode down the steep descent, from the tableland to camp, at 12.30 p.m. When we got there we found Kirby and the other two men had returned, reporting that they had been fired at from a farm to which we had frequently patrolled before.

June 28.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

I was one of two, under Corporal Gray, warned for early patrol, 5.30 a.m. Eric C. Scott was the other man. We rode southward to Von Maltitz's farm, and there partook of coffee made from ground, roasted, dried-peaches, and some excellent cured beef, and bread-and-butter. Von Maltitz was an interesting character, about sixty-five years of age, erect, medium height, and exceedingly talkative. What is more, he talked well and sensibly. He spoke English fluently. He spoke of current events quite as an outsider might do, as if he were watching with interest a drama, with the acting of which he had nothing to do. He talked in an even chatter, without malice or seeming bias of the actions of either English or Boers. He confessed his sympathies were with the Boers, but he had English friends. Even now English ladies were staying in his family. His sons were in the Boer army. He was free to discuss any topic I cared to moot. Both he and his family were interesting. His wife, a little old lady with bright brown eyes, was very sallow. He said, "She is an invalid, she is the mother of my eleven children." He



had four sons in the war; one had just been killed, shot through the head, his youngest. He spoke this in the same even voice, without other emotion than a still greater rapidity of utterance. I asked him how he knew this. He said, "The Kaffir boy came home and said, 'My boss is dead, I can do no more!'" His son, he added, was sure to have distinguished himself had he lived, he was brave and wise for his years. He had captured Major — by himself. He was "only a boy, you know." "I have asked for his horse and his bridle and saddle, just for a memorial of my boy, you know." He supposed there could be no objection to that. His son was killed on the Zand River, not very far from Winburg. He himself had fought in Natal, at Colenso, and at Spion Kop. He spoke quite impatiently of the English systems of fighting. The English were brave, but did not know how to fight the Boers. They had made the most terrible blunder at Spion Kop. Warren made a great mistake in retreating, and he bragged that he had returned without the loss of a man! How many had he lost *on* Spion Kop! Spion Kop could have been held by the English, and had they held it they could have annihilated the Boers, could have cannonaded their laagers in every direction. I suggested that it had been said that there was no water there. He said it was not true, there was water there, he knew it. I said the soldiers were worn out with marching and fighting that day. I asked him what the local forces of Boers were going to do; I said he must know. No, he had seen only a few Boer scouts; he thought they would all give trouble before they surrendered. There was one thing certain, he said, they would give up at once if they knew that Kruger had done so. This man had a pass to remain on his farm; any Boer could obtain one if he came in and said he would stay on his farm!

Von Maltitz's farm will be best remembered as one at which patrols could buy the following provisions. Cooked turkey, 6s., cooked goose, 4s., cooked fowl, 2s.,

bread, 1s. per loaf, besides dried fruit, bacon and corned beef.

This day was not to be devoid of hard work and interest. On the return of our small patrol to camp at 9 a.m., we found that Mr. Roller and a party of twelve of 34th Company had gone out to scout for a reconnoitring force of eighty of the Leinsters, with a Maxim (Leinster Maxim). The party went out on the Senekal Road and followed the telegraph line for five or six miles and then turned north-eastward towards the bordering kopje ranges, where it was supposed that the enemy had taken up a position. Here, a small but interesting engagement took place. I cannot give full particulars of it, for I was not present, although I must have witnessed a part of the attack from a distance, but the main facts were common property, to-day (29th). They found the enemy in considerable numbers, the Leinsters could not hold their ground: they hastily retired to a donga near by, and had to abandon their Maxim, for a while, in a drift. Palmer, determined that it should not be lost, with Davern and T. A. Scott, of ours, was chiefly instrumental in rallying some of the Leinsters, and in getting the gun away. During this operation Roller, with the few others of the 34th, took up a covering position in a kraal. The Boers retired, but kept up a heavy fire all the while. Our force being so very small, Roller sent in three messengers to Klip Nek Camp (Meikle, Jacoby, and Anderson) to ask for support. They came into camp with word that the reconnoitring force was hard pressed.

In the meanwhile Sergeant Burrows had been ordered to take out a patrol of eleven men. I was told off for one of them. We started at 3.10 p.m., and had proceeded out on the plain, north north-east, before Roller's messengers came into camp. We scouted to a rise about two miles north-west of the kopje from which the Boers fired at us on June 6th. To the east or slightly north of east we saw a pretty large number of Boers—a hundred at least, mounted, and galloping about in an excitement for which





ROLLER ON HIS MARE "GABARDINE" AT KLIP DRIFT NEK.



PALMER WITH THE MAXIM AT KLIP DRIFT NEK.

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we could not account. They were quite two thousand yards from us and shooting rapidly to our left, or left front. Just at this moment the fifteen-pounder on the high summit north-east of camp began to shell in the direction of our June 6th kopje, and we soon saw many of the enemy escaping from this quarter. The shells made a long, screaming sound, close over our right flank. Burrows, with good judgment, pushed us forward to the next ridge, and then sent Fortescue into camp with information, and a request for further orders. With only eleven men it was impossible to make a more effective demonstration. Word presently came to us, from a Leinster officer, who had galloped out from camp to keep an eye on things generally, for us to retire to camp at once. The officer then told us that messengers had come to camp to say that our morning reconnoitring force had been cut off and was fighting the enemy under considerable pressure. A few minutes after, as we were proceeding to camp, we met all the available mounted men that had been left in camp in extended order, under Brune and Newnham, galloping out in the direction of where Roller and the Leinsters were supposed to be. It was now after sunset and it rapidly became very dark and very cold. We galloped and trotted on about six or seven miles and halted in silence on the veldt. We saw and heard nothing. Orders were whispered, Pyecroft and I were sent to the front as an outpost, and we remained out on the left advance for upwards of an hour. Pyecroft's mare was very troublesome, we could not prevent her from champing her bit, and that seemed a great noise in the stillness, as we strained our ears towards our front to catch any sound that might bring us information. Still, nothing developed, and, by and by, the Sergeant-Major (for *every* available man had been scraped up in camp for this force) was sent out to give us the order to return to camp. We mounted, and, after a hard gallop, overtook the rest, when Newnham met us and put Pyecroft and me on as right flank scouts. It was with the

greatest difficulty that we kept in touch with the Column, the darkness was so intense. On our return journey the Leinsters were discovered by whistling signals. We were soon informed that they were safe and that they had camped, but that Roller and his men had just ridden to Klip Nek. We had missed our men in the dark. We then trotted homeward; as scout I felt very thankful to the artillery picket on the high kopje above the Nek, who, knowing that men were out on the plain blundering around in the dark, kept a signal lamp steadily burning to guide us. We were all fortunate in the gallop out; in spite of unseen holes, innumerable anthills, treacherous little dongas, and loose strands of barbed wire, only one horse had come to grief. He had fallen headlong with his rider into an antbear's hole, and Newnham sent them back with a comrade whose horse was also worn out with work. We got into camp shortly after nine o'clock. My little mare, thank God, has borne up well, but she is weak, very weak, from overwork, and little and bad food, but she is as well as any other, and is one of the three or four Knightsbridge horses remaining in the Company.

June 29.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

I was told off for one of six men for armed, wood fatigue, under Quartermaster-Sergeant Grumley. We got some branches of trees at a farm—around to the right going out north-east from Klip Nek. We armed men mounted guard on the ridges around the farm, whilst the waggon under Grumley got the wood. While I was watching I saw a Kaffir herder go out from a flock of sheep\* he was tending, up to the next farm, about a mile further on—the place from which Kirby said he had been sniped (on June 27th). We did not fire, but I felt pretty certain that he was a messenger and spy. In just such a similar case one of Grumley's mules was shot in the leg, on a wood fatigue of a few days ago. A Boer

\* At this time we were not indiscriminately rounding up the flocks and herds of the country. The flocks and cattle of Boers with passes were either allowed to remain on the land or were taken only as necessity required, when receipts were given for them by officers commanding.

had crept up and sniped. We returned to camp with a waggon load of green wood. I then found myself told off for grazing, and, subsequently, for night stable guard.

We frequently ask ourselves what our division is doing, and what in the general scheme of things our Klip Nek Camp is. We are told nothing, unless now and then a lie or two, to mystify us. We rarely see our Generals, we know nothing of the distribution of the other parts of the division but what we have gleaned by journeying to Ficksburg and Hammonia. We see that the bugles and bands are ordered to practice frequently, and it is said that we are thereby trying to make believe that we are a stronger force than we really are. I think the enemy must be pretty accurately informed as to our numbers, &c., seeing that Boers are sometimes allowed to come into the precincts of camp to sell bread to the officers, and to make complaints. We do not know where General Rundle is. We only have a vague idea, taking one thing and another—marches and countermarches of troops, camps, and posts, that we may be endeavouring to maintain an unbreakable line from Ficksburg to Senekal, and to be trying to keep the enemy east of this line. As to the individual soldier he is as if he were but a small and insignificant piece of a huge machine. The Boer system, or lack of system, admits of more individualism, and greater elasticity—an advantage we cannot hope to gain for this war. Every Boer, one suspects, knows at least the main object of his General, and so every *loyal* man of them can be consciously pressing to that end. A motive is never offered us, we are unconscious of all except drudgery, and the necessity of obedience. We can all see, very plainly, that more mounted troops and mobility are items greatly to be desired.

I have been writing this in the sun (so it may be a little mad) and a rather chill wind, in Klip Nek Camp. I am lying with my back against a sun-warmed anthill. I am grazing my own and Kelsey's horses. We are camped on the south-west side of the basin. The place now has a



deserted appearance: there seems to be but a very small force here—the Leinster Regiment scattered into small laagers or pickets on the various elevated positions around the camp; a gun or two of artillery; our two sections of the 34th Company, and a Company of Brabant's Horse on Middlesex Kopje. The camping grounds of the Nek are getting very dirty. The grass is trampled and bare, patches of feathers are everywhere, old and ill-covered latrines, burnt patches, tins and refuse are in evidence against us as a force.

Poor young Grout's grave is quite near our lines—not a hundred yards away from where his brother is now occupied on a job with the waggon; I am told that General Campbell did not wish the surviving brother to rejoin the firing line for the present.

line 30.

Last night I was night stable guard, with Barrington on my relief. It was windy and chilly, but there was no frost, and this morning it makes for rain. It was a quiet day to-day. I was able to do some washing in a biscuit tin, and in the afternoon, as it promised for rain, many of us looked about for some sort of shelter for the night. At first I thought a big anthill scooped out, cave fashion, would help me, but a stab with my bayonet into one soon convinced me that it was an impracticable idea. The piece I had chipped out allowed me to re-examine them and their habits. They are deliberate and dazed in their movement when thus disturbed—not frantic as our active English ants are. Their bodies are soft and limp—almost flabby—of a light red colour, semi-transparent globular head with proboscis and two antennæ or feelers—no visible eyes, legs very fine and spidery, but short, apparently three legs on each side. I do not know how they render their building material so hard, but it is weather-proof and cement-like. I should say that there are at least three different kinds of ants in a hill, or is it that they are in different stages of development? The one described is the kind most numerous. A few are grey and of larger proportions, and another kind still

larger and stronger, with, apparently, a mandible instead of proboscis. I have not time to make accurate notes of such things, but I do like to look into them. Besides the anthills cut a considerable figure, in several ways, in our life. They are often cover in the field, they must be avoided in riding in the ranks, they are the prime cause of the most dangerous veldt holes (of the aardvark), they are our stoves and ovens, our seats and lounges.

In the evening I found two iron waggon-wheel tyres and I brought them into the lines, and I am now designing an arched dog kennel, in which half-buried tyres will be the chief roof support. I think it will be a successful idea.

Stables 5.30 a.m. About noon a patrol of twenty men was ordered out, Mr. Newnham in charge. I was one of the right flank scouts with Jacoby. We started out in extended order on the Hammonia Road. About four miles out we met a convoy, coming from Hammonia, in charge of a party of the Gloucester Imperial Yeomanry and a few of the Leinster Infantry. After Mr. Newnham and the Gloucester officer had had a chat, and the convoy had all come up, we extended in line again as rear guard to Klip Nek Camp. The Gloucester officer said that the Hammonia Road was now commonly called "Gloucester Road," as his men had little else to do but patrol up and down it. On my way back I was fortunate enough to be able to buy a big loaf of bread, which I divided with Kelsey.

July 1.  
Sunday.

A party of twenty-four under Roller went out to scout for a Company of Leinsters towards Wonder Kop. I did not go. Several of the horses had needed doctoring, and as my little mare had a sitfast, the vet, a non-com. from the artillery lines, cut it, and now it is an open sore. I must get a fresh horse for a day or two if I can. The patrol returned at 3 p.m. They saw nothing of the enemy. In the afternoon I was one of three (with Patterson and Day), under Quartermaster - Sergeant Grumley, told off for forage and rations fatigue. We

July 2.

drew from the Leinster stores, and put into our waggon the following :—

3 sacks of oats.  
4   "   " bran.  
10   "   " mealies ground coarse or crushed.  
2 lbs. of tea.  
8 lbs. of coffee.  
17 lbs. of sugar.

The sugar was the first we had had for a couple of weeks.

For the last ten days the men have drawn but two biscuits a day. There is no fuel to be got, only *bois de vache*, and that is damp now with frost, rain, and dew, so that our half and quarter rations of flour are of little or no use to us. With grease, of some sort, and fuel we might make at least a leathery chupatti. The band played again. It rained.

July 3.

I have to make use of every opportunity in order to keep up my diary and notes. This morning I brought my waterproof bag out to the grazing ground, and I am writing this, stretched at full length, keeping an eye on three horses at the same time. The poor beggars are not grazing, but lying down, and glad enough to do so after the discomfort of the muddy lines and the chill rain. It still looks threatening, the weather is far from pleasant. We have several men on the sick list, including three or four corporals. Night stable guards now come every other night. We have to supply six guards to the Leinster trenches, besides the six stable guards, and the four guards on Ingram's store at Hibernia. Ingram affects to fear a Boer attack on his store. He is sitting on the fence, it seems to us. It is hardly possible that four men could do any good nearly five miles from camp, in case of an attack. This guard is coveted, because it affords a chance to get out of the reach of the nagging and worrying that continually goes on in the lines, and because food and a wash can be had there. That is what the men say who have been fortunate enough to be warned for it. One of the chief grievances of the men is

that no opportunities are afforded them of doing those things for themselves which the Government cannot do, or leaves undone—little things which would make our lot so much lighter. The difficulty there is of washing either their clothes or themselves is an instance. Had our men lacked private funds they would have had a terrible time here, so scarce is food that one can stomach. Should an hour of leisure fall to the men a disagreeable way of doing some disagreeable duty is promptly invented. Yesterday, six men under Corporal Gray had to go to the site of an old Regular camp, a quarter of a mile away from ours, to pick up the offal of their butchers and hundreds of sheeps' trotters. At this moment we are over the south-west hill, far outside the pickets. There is no grass here that the horses will eat—they are all lying down, which they could and would do a mile nearer camp, and why the men are sent so far out on such a wet and stormy day — alone knows! There is a good deal of bitter cursing. Fault must lie somewhere for such rankling ill feeling. The men evince the greatest eagerness to do their duty and to be useful—but it is the needless, unnecessary nagging and worry which causes the bitterness.

Captain Brune did a graceful thing to-day. Corporal Ouvry, who is ill, was asked by him to sleep in his tent for the night.

To-day one of the Leinsters showed me his rifle, which was shot through the stock with a Mauser bullet. He had been sniped at on the north-east picket. The bullet was extracted from the leg of Grumley's mule yesterday. At Hammonia, one night, as one of the Leinsters was holding his pannikin out for his rum ration, a sniper's bullet passed through the sides of the cup. An officer promptly gave him 2s. 6d. for it, for a curiosity. Rum is a luxury that the 34th Company does not get! We had our last ration at Senekal. A *Weekly Times* article, on the subject of the rations of the army on active service, aroused much satirical amusement in our lines. I am

sorry to see that lice are getting numerous among the men. I am thankful I do not yet suffer.

It is said that an infantry Adjutant has gone out to the Boer laager—we are wondering what will come of that. I think everybody would like to see a speedy peace.

Perhaps the heavy rain and chill exposure of last night will account for some of the misery and discontent among the men to-day. I had managed to build a sort of kennel with my tyres, some barbed wire, a few gum-tree twigs, and some stones. Over the frame-work I weighted a blanket, and I was able to keep moderately dry and warm. My feet extended beyond cover, but I wrapped my waterproof sheet about them. The trench I had dug around the "foundations" carried off quite a stream of water, and I went to sleep to the sound of its rippling. Several of the men dug trenches, and stretched blankets over turf or sod banks, rifles, and sticks.

July 4.

Every available man of the 34th Company was ordered to fall in this morning. Forty-one men rode out (upon orders received from Headquarters last night) to Hibernia store, to pilot a convoy to Klip Nek. The convoy was expected at the store at ten o'clock (a.m.), from Winburg. Morris and I were mounted sentries on the Winburg Road. Morris held horses, while I watched upon the slope out towards Doornkop. Newnham posted us, and subsequently we were visited by Brune. I was guard here for nearly three hours, when we were relieved. No convoy arrived up to late in the afternoon, when Brune gave orders to mount and to return to Klip Nek. As I had had little opportunity to forage with the rest, Newnham gave me leave to call at the house of Carmichael, whose wife made bread for us occasionally. Carmichael\* was one of the guides for columns moving about in this part of the O.V.S. His house was near the store, on the south side of the drift. Mrs. Carmichael was making a dozen scones for me, for which I had

\* Carmichael became a marked man, and was waylaid, murdered, and robbed by four Boers, near Ladybrand, in May, 1901.



paid one shilling. Just after the Company had passed, on their way in to camp, Meikle and Jacoby came in for two loaves of bread that they had bespoken. It was not ready, and they then said that they could not wait for it, and rode on. A little batch of bread was in the oven, and would be ready in a quarter of an hour. I then said I would buy it, and would wait for it. Ten minutes later Corporal ———, Mr. Newnham's servant Keef, Kelsey, and McIlwraith, jun., rode up, and ——— claimed the bread on behalf of Blount, who was one of Meikle and Jacoby's sub-section, who, of course, messed together. That sub-section had, however, only ordered two loaves, and as there were three in the oven I claimed by right of priority the privilege of the third, as Corporal ——— ordered me to join the Company. I refused to do this, saying that Mr. Newnham had already given me permission to stay. High words followed, and ——— put his hand on his revolver and said if he had to use "that" he would prevent me from having the odd loaf! Appealed to, Mrs. Carmichael "supposed the *Corporal* must have it," so I left when my scones were ready. This was a bad case of bullying and of taking unwarrantable advantage of stripes. Such is life when hunger comes along! I returned quickly to camp, and, almost immediately, the whole Company were ordered to turn about at once to return to Hibernia. A messenger had galloped in to say that the convoy was sighted, and again we had a hot four or five miles canter. We found the convoy, halted, at Hibernia; it was getting dark, and a discussion arose among the officers as to the best crossing of the spruit, in which Captain ——— advised the most difficult, as it was the shorter route. Very soon one of the ox waggons got stuck at the bottom of the drift, and the convoy became divided; the few waggons which had crossed over trekked on towards camp. After a weary delay a few of us, who knew the longer road, persuaded the officers to adopt it, and to trek around the head of the Klip Drift donga, by way

of old Von Maltitz's farm. Palmer, Davis, Kelsey, Edmondston and I piloted the remainder (the largest part) of the convoy on this road, riding ahead of it. We got into camp in the dark, after eight o'clock, very weary and hungry. I had experienced many fourths of July more joyous than this one!

The following was the text of a proclamation on the door of Ingram's store:—

#### NOTICE.

It having come to my knowledge that small armed parties of burghers of the late O.V.S. are in the habit of patrolling the country, hiding in the hills by day, and at night taking shelter in farms, farm buildings, outhouses, &c., within the sphere of my military operations,

Now, therefore, I, Henry McLeod Leslile [*sic*] Rundle, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Lieutenant-General Commanding Her Majesty's Forces, Winburg, Senekal, Ficksburg Districts, do hereby call upon and order all residents on such farms to discontinue the practice of harbouring such ex-burghers, and in all cases to give information as to the whereabouts of any armed ex-burghers in the vicinity of their farms or neighbourhood to some officer of this force under my command.

Furthermore, I give notice that by the non-compliance with this order, residents on farms render themselves liable to the following punishments:—

- (1) Confiscation of their farms.
- (2) The cancelling of all receipts for goods requisitioned on behalf of the military authorities, and no payment whatsoever will be made in respect of same.
- (3) A fine which will in no event be less than a sum of 2s. 6d. per morgen on the area of each farm.

(Signed)

LESLILE [*sic*] RUNDLE, Lieut.-General Commanding Her Majesty's Forces, Winburg, Senekal, Ficksburg Districts.

TROMMEL,

30th June, 1900.

July 5.

The convoy turned out to be the one having our tents—which we pitched in the afternoon—extra blankets, and five bags of mail. I got eight very welcome letters and two magazines. There was rifle firing on the hills east of camp. Three Boers gave themselves up to-day. They

said that no word had been given the burghers about the recent proclamations. They tell us that there are three hundred Boers in one laager and eight hundred in another, and that, further along the hills, there are others. This morning a horse died in the lines of the cold, and Pyecroft's mare slipped her colt; both incidents resulted from the severe riding of yesterday. In the afternoon, as I was taking four horses up the hill to graze, Corporal ——— stepped out of his tent, deliberately waylaying me, and began to speak of my "damned insolence" of yesterday. I halted and explained to him what I thought of his own action in the matter. He did not like it, and reported me to the Sergeant-Major, and when my guard was done I was informed that I should have to go up before the Captain.

We now do early morning stables. We rub our horses July 6 and, what is very important, we pick out the ticks. Our horses have suffered terribly from these rapacious little parasites.

I was called up before Captain Brune to answer ———'s accusations. There was not a man in the lines who did not express himself in my favour. Sergeant-Major Cowan, Napier, and Kelsey who had witnessed the row at Carmichael's house, walked up with me. I awaited ———'s statement, which was very lame, and then replied to it. Newnham was also in attendance. I said that I could not permit any one, non-commissioned officer or not, to threaten me with a pistol or to swear at me. I added that I had lived a long time in a country where either offence was unpardonable. I was dismissed, and it afterwards transpired that Corporal ——— got a severe "talking to."

Later in the day I was on rations fatigue, and, subsequently, one of four, under Grumley, to dig a new latrine. I spent a quiet afternoon in the tent to which Kelsey had been told off. I do not like the tents, after sleeping in the open so long. At sundown I was warned for trench guard, and Barrington, Heenan, Day,

Davern, Fowler, and I, under Corporal Barton, went out, just after sunset, to the south-east trenches. Heenan and I got second relief. The reliefs slept in the trenches. It was impressed upon us that the enemy were contemplating an attack, in order to break through our line towards the north-west. There were two sentries to each watch, one to stand guard over the trench whilst each sentry, in his turn, patrolled to his respective road and back. It was a very cold night, and it was as much as we could do to endure the torture of the damp hoar frost that our toes and ankles collected from the rank, dead grass, and the discomfort of the chill stiffening of frozen hair about our mouths. We tramped and stumbled, out and back, to and from the trench, rifle at the slope, or shoulder, eyes and ears astrain, the stars for company, occasionally hearing the distant cry of a picket, ringing out clear, "Halt! Who goes there!" It was far too dark to walk a straight line from point to point. But in our groping there was one thing which did not admit of doubt: it was plain that the stars in their courses moved inevitably on. It was as if we were watching the hands of a clock—and maybe God the Father would let us, some time, as little children, watch the winding of it. At midnight the Milky Way looked like a birthmark of creation, and on the verge of a black hiatus in its fringe, that resembles a gulf of deep, untroubled water in the midst of foam, stands, upright, the Southern Cross. You can make out of the host of bright stars, in that same quarter of the sky, a number of attendant crosses all swirling about the Pole. The sentry, according to his imagination and lack of power to resist star-gazing, will take, like human watchers in every age have done, a star,

"Whose worth 's unknown although his height be taken,"

for a guide, and because he has given himself over for the occasion to a primal instinct he does it on the next tramp in spite of the laugh of his more prosaic comrade,

in whom he has perhaps confided, or that he has missed his mark to right or left by fifty paces, or that the poised and brilliant boss,

“Like God the Father's globe on both His hands ye worship,”

has moved a measure in both space and time. My good comrade Heenan laughed at my fancies and was more interested in the meteors, of which we saw many, one of which was very large and bright.

Heenan carried his rifle “easy” by the sling and tried to keep his numbed fingers warm by thrusting them in opposite sleeves of his cloak, while I thanked God as night went and the frost fell thicker that I had a pair of old gloves.

The men grumble—very reasonably—of several unnecessary hardships in this camp. There is a water-cart belonging to our Battalion which, if here, would be of the greatest boon and help to the men. It is understood to be “with the Staff.” Now the Staff—a favoured few—are not desperately in need of it as we are; they are where water-carts are not scarce and where water is plentiful (Hammonia). Here we have a trickling spring at the bottom of this basin, the only water near enough or good enough for use. The water fatigue is an exceedingly irksome one; the tiny stream from which we obtain our Company water runs out of the bank of a small donga close to the level of the bottom in black, sticky earth; a piece of a tin biscuit-box has been thrust in to enable the aguador (as Mexicans would say) to catch the water in a flat mess-tin or a very shallow cup. It thus takes fully twenty minutes merely to fill a single “dixie” and we have three to fill three times a day, besides a drum for the officers’ mess. These have to be carried toilsomely a half mile up to camp. All around the spring the soft black mud defies approach. The harder hummocks are treacherously slippery. I have seen men lose their boots, making of themselves a “holy show” in the mire. I have seen a man in the act of lifting a full



dixie to the bankside to his comrade fly headlong, dixie, water, and all, as if his feet had been shot from under him; when the line of waiting men, almost without exception, had the good nature, or such an intimate acquaintance with the extent of the misfortune, as to keep from laughing.

The ration tea tastes very strongly of smoky eucalyptus, as the green gum-tree branches are the only fuel our cook house is able to procure. We have been unable to buy bread for several days. Although some of our kit-valises came up with the tents we are nearly all short of clothes. Many of the men are in rags—ragged breeches and coats and no drawers. The men are frequently seen with handkerchiefs tied around their knees, especially in the morning, when it is so cold. Last night the water in my water-bottle at my head froze solid. We are in blissful ignorance of any military news—of the distribution of troops or Generals.

7. We exercised horses in the early morning. The horses of our Company are suffering much from cold, damp, improper food, and too much work. A company of Queenstown I.Y. passed through camp to-day. We grazed our horses and rested.

Several of the men were tardy this morning, not turning out at dawn, so Captain Brune has instituted bugle calls once more. We were again ordered to be vigilant at night, as a Boer attack is expected. Twelve extra men were ordered to the south-east trenches; I was one of them. All the sleeping quarters in the trenches were occupied, so I made my bivouac above ground. It was intensely cold.

8. lay. We were awakened by bugle call about 5 a.m., long before light, answered at stables, and were ordered to exercise horses until 7 a.m. This bugle call was the first for months. The sun rose shortly after seven.

"And the sun looked over the mountain's rim,  
And straight was a path of gold for him."

We ran the horses up and down and round about. It was so intensely cold that I got a spare pair of woollen socks to put over my hands. One or two men followed my example. Little icicles formed on my beard. Violent exercise does not come easy at this altitude, which is about five or six thousand feet above sea-level, and one easily gets out of breath. I am trying to live on my rations—two biscuits and a little flour for bread, and mutton eternal. I find it no easy task. I have a P.O.O. for five pounds, but cannot change it. With a little ready cash it might be possible still to buy a few extras at farms when on patrol. Rumours of night attacks at Ficksburg and the catching of snipers at Hammonia are about camp, evidently all exaggerated. Tomlinson told me that at Hammonia he heard that the Boers lost thirty killed and wounded in the barbed wire entanglements at Ficksburg\*; that had not some I.Y. come between the big gun and the attacking Boers the enemy would have been annihilated; that six snipers, &c., &c. I find it is best not to put too much trust in "camp yarns."

Groome tells me that in the last mail he got a letter from Weisberg, who says that his wound is healing, but the X rays show that there are splinters in his arm which must be removed. Agnew, we learn, is well of his wound, but has since taken enteric badly.

A little Union Jack is flying at our waggon. Wood fatigue brought in a lot of fig-trees for firewood. The tents are not much used after all by our men. I shall certainly try to do without tents; they are stuffy, damp, and verminous. Small birds visit our lines in the day, driven in no doubt by winter hunger. The water wagtail is a common visitor.

During the morning there was some firing in the distance, but we did not learn what it was about. I was again warned with others for the trenches; there was

\* I found upon careful inquiry afterwards that these very circumstantial camp stories were great exaggerations.

too much of a scramble for places to sleep in the trenches. It is a pity that hardship and hunger should seem bound to cause selfishness. Sergeant Burrows was in charge of the guard and Sergeant Evans was in charge of the gun section. Our Maxim was to the right of our trench, looking out towards Hammonia. At eight o'clock, just as most of the guard had turned in, we were suddenly called to arms by a shot, apparently fired by the picket to our left. We were shortly informed that one of the Leinster sentries had bent over a camp fire to get a live coal for his pipe, and that one of his cartridges, falling in the fire, had exploded, blowing a terrible wound in his face and eye. We then turned in again. In camp fifteen men had been warned at 7 p.m. to ride out on the Hammonia Road to meet a convoy. They returned to camp with the convoy at ten o'clock.

9.

I was one of three (Davern and Day were the others), under Sergeant Green, ordered before daylight for Cossack post. The position was a high rise or hill of the veldt on the left of the Hammonia Road nearly three miles from camp and just south-west from the point of Middlesex Kopje. Our guard was two hours on and four off until sunset. We made the site of a deserted Kaffir kraal our post; from it we could view a vast stretch of black and khaki patched country southward, bounded by the eternal kopje ranges. Day was first relief and Davern and I collected ox chips for fuel and made coffee for all, for the want of which we had been almost famished on the road up. We judged there must have been from fifteen to twenty degrees of frost last night. I then wrote my diary in the warming sun. The natural history about here is not uninteresting. I noted several species of small birds—some beautiful, if not gorgeous, in their plumage. There is a blackbird with a white rump; it somewhat resembles the English starling in habits and manner. There are doves, pigeons, and many hawks. Yesterday I saw a small snake. I again had an opportunity of examining the ants in a hill which had had a cooking

fire burning off and on in its top for several days. In many parts of this broken hill ants were groping about at work in their slow, persistent fashion. I saw a few of the large, soft, whitish kind among the others in this hill; it was like a large louse with soft mandibles; it may be an ant in an early stage of its existence. There were both square and round Kaffir huts here—about twenty-five huts, all roofless, for it does not pay to be prodigal of timber in such a woodless country or to leave behind even the rudest kinds of rafters and battens; the walls of sods and stones, which are cheap, alone remained; they were not worth moving; new sods are cut around a new site. These deserted kraals are very common all about the country; their desertion has nothing to do with our war. Some remains seem to be many years old. I think in most cases they are due to new families, who desired to find for themselves, who “yearned beyond the skyline where the strange roads go down,” for I suppose that even Kaffir kraals become at times “man-stified,” and then the old ones die a natural death. Close by this old kraal there was a new one full of life. The men and women watched us furtively from the precincts of their huts, chatting in little groups or squatting around pots and dung-fed fires, whose smoke in fleck and curl betokened communal activities, routine habits, life proceeding. There were a few lithe, smooth, black-skinned women with clay water-jars or vases and Kaffir beer-pots balanced on turbaned heads, their figures negligently but somewhat gracefully draped with gay-patterned blankets, which furnished that splash of colour that marked the picturesque. The Kaffirs here seemed pastoral and simple, unspoiled by a too intimate knowledge of the “worse” habits of the whites.

In some stone-walled cattle kraals below we saw, stalking us warrior-fashion, with little sticks for assegais, a half-dozen little naked Kaffir boys. Their perfect mimicry of gesticulation, dance, shout and scream, defiance and craftiness in attack was amusing, it seemed

more than ordinary, or hereditary instincts such as chicken display in their early behaviour.

I poked about a bit in the ruins and found one of the flat, brass, circular neck ornaments that the wives of a well-to-do Kaffir wear. **O** Another curious form of ornamentation among the richer Basuto wives and girls is the line marking of the face—three blue vein-like lines from the ears, radiating across the cheeks to nose, mouth and chin.

We brought mutton for four men for the day: our meat was a small leg of mutton—it was "bourgeois mutton" at Klip Nek Camp. This served mutton with occasional compressed vegetables—mutton became nauseating even to hungry men. We elected to have roast mutton—delicious change! We nibbled and with the Sergeant's warm sanction I rode off to Mrs. Krog's farm (see February 12, 1901), a quarter of a mile the other side of the Hammonia Road, a mile from our post. Davern in the meantime made it his work to cook porridge and more coffee. Mrs. Krog baked our ration flour into bread and I ran up a further bill:—

Duck's eggs	—	—	—	—	—	2/-
Cooking mutton and baking bread	—	—	—	—	—	2/-
Milk	—	—	—	—	—	6d.
Cooked chicken	—	—	—	—	—	2/-
Help of Kaffir boy	—	—	—	—	—	3d.

So that we had a brave feast, such as we had not had for a long time.

About midday a party of twenty-five of Brabant's Horse rode by our post, from Middlesex Kopje to Hammonia Road, to meet a convoy coming from Hammonia. Shortly after, the right flank guard of the convoy, a company of Leinster Infantry, passed our post and went on towards Klip Nek, and afterwards went back. Those of us on "sentry-go" kept careful guard, for it is an important point. The day proved to be faultless; a clear, cool, exquisitely blue, bright sunny day, the faintest



white veil over the more distant hills, and, as sunset neared, there came with the chilling of the air rich gold and purple changes of inexplicable beauty and peace, as if to show us, in the midst of war, a visible sign of that peace which passeth all understanding.

Grass fires, of tremendous extent, have appeared around us for the past few nights. Those on the kopje ranges north and north-east of Middlesex Kopje were particularly wide and bright.

We returned to Klip Nek Camp last night from Cossack post in the dark, and I found I was told off for night guard. I was second relief. Corporal Ouvry was corporal of the guard. After midnight some despatches came in from Hammonia, with orders for them to be forwarded at once to Senekal. Napier was called out, and Lunn, Groome, and Palmer were chosen to accompany him. Barrington, who was one of the guards, was anxious to join his chum's little party, and I told him I would do his guard for him, and he started out with the rest at two o'clock a.m. The fires around were again lurid and numerous, and it was curious to see them dying out, towards morning, with the falling of the intense frost.

I had a little time for myself after stables, water fatigue with Day, and morning grazing, and towards the afternoon Marriott kindly cut my hair and beard, which had grown very long and bushy; then I washed my mare and bathed her back where the "veterinary" cut it. Later I went over the Artillery Hill and had a capital bath. From my kit-valise, newly arrived, I got a change of underclothes, the first I had been able to get for over two months.

The night was milder last night. As we were exercising the horses at sunrise, on the road running through the bottom of the basin, we sighted Napier and his party returning from Senekal. They arrived at Senekal, eighteen miles from our camp, yesterday morning, delivered their despatches, turned out eleven sacks of mail for us at the Military Post Office, hired a waggon, engaged a Boer trader who was "neutral," filled the waggon with our

July 10.

July 11.

mail, and stores which the man was to sell for cash to 34th Company, and started on the homeward journey by night. On the knap of the pass we gave them a cheer, as they rode in escorting the waggon—all looking weary and sleepy. They had travelled all night,\* they brought in their ten-mule waggon a most welcome lot of luxuries, jam, treacle, condensed milk, coffee, sugar, matches, candles, soap, cocoa, and sardines—more than welcome after our long fast on scanty rations! The owner stayed all day selling to the 34th and to the Leinsters' pickets. The Regular officers obtained, very early in the scrimmage, a corner in the treacle, for they bought it by the case, which should not have been allowed, it was not playing the game. It was no use protesting. Sergt.-Major Cowan told me that he had booked thirty-five pounds' worth on the men's pay, and handed the trader that amount in cash. Twice that amount must have been expended by the men in cash besides. Prices ranged very high. Biscuits, 2s. 6d. per pound; candles, 1s. 6d. per packet of six; *small* tins of treacle, 1s. 6d. each; condensed milk, 2s. per tin, &c. I was fortunate in obtaining change for my Post Office Order for £5, allowing a commission to the Sergt.-Major of five shillings. I got five letters and a pair of boots. I was called away from all this diversion for orderly duty. I was sent out with a despatch from Colonel Martin, of the Leinsters, to Captain Douglas, of Brabant's, on Middlesex Kopje. It looks as if, in the near future, there might be a movement of troops. There is a sense of coming change in the air. Apparently a company of Brabant's Horse had held Middlesex Kopje ever since we left it on June 16th. It was with some curiosity that I

\* Grooms related to me some amusing adventures of the night. At one time they passed a kopje, where, on the skyline, they saw moving objects peering at them from behind what they thought to be boulders. After a hurried consultation they decided to charge, Napier and Palmer led. Near the summit they charged desperately upon a bunch of sleepy, gorged aasvogels perched on anthills. Palmer, who had impetuously overshot the mark, almost lost himself in the dark.

climbed up to their camp among the boulders. It seemed a long time ago that it had been a scene of a good deal of activity to our Company, so much had been done in the interim. I noted with a feeling of envy that the relations between officers and men were easier than in the I.Y. There was a freer atmosphere, nor could I see that it interfered with the readiness of the men to do their work, to obey orders, or with their efficiency.

I returned to camp, and at 10.30 a.m. I was warned for patrol duty. Three of us, Pyecroft, Patterson and I, had to attend two Leinster officers, who were going out to visit Nieser's farm (see June 10th), taking with them two Kaffir horse thieves. These Kaffirs had been captured after a chase by one of our small patrols, and the occupants of Nieser's farm were supposed to know something of the doings of one of them. The farm lay a little west of south, towards Wonder Kop, and the farmhouse was on the summit of one of the kopjes or foothills about Wonder Kop. The Kaffir was accused of driving off horses, towards the Boer laager, from this farm. Some such thing was evidently done, but I thought it not unlikely that it was done with the collusion of some of the "neutral" occupants of this or neighbouring farms. We passed one or two farms on our journey, and found bread and fresh milk plentiful—for a price. These unmolested farms must, undoubtedly, be as so many depôts for the enemy. The officers stayed behind, for a half an hour or so, after having taken the depositions of the old man and others, while we had waited outside. There were several children and some women about, the latter evidently prying. As we rode to camp with the prisoners the principal culprit asked what was going to be done with him, and P—— told him cheerfully that he would be sure to be hanged for such a crime. He was much frightened, and presently passing a kraal where there were Kaffir women waiting, he said goodbye to an old woman who he said was his mother.\*

\* This man was punished rather lightly, I fancy. I heard he got a few months' imprisonment.

In the evening a patrol of twenty men (of 34th) under Newnham went out to Hibernia store to pilot a convoy from Senekal to Klip Nek Camp. The men returned sometime after dark, "grousing" a good deal because they had been given to understand that after all their services were superfluous. The convoy had already an escort of fifty to one hundred Colonials, so that 34th's help seemed to flavour of supererogation.

July 12.

I was grazing guard all the morning. In the afternoon I had nothing to do, and Faber asked me to go and rest or read in his sub-section's "bug hutch," as he and the rest of his sub-section were on patrol and other duty. I was warned for night guard. About 11.30 p.m. Ingram rode in from his store at Hibernia with a cock-and-bull story that he expected a night attack, and that he had information that his store was to be looted and burnt. Ten men under Napier were sent out at once to patrol beyond Hibernia. In the early morning, long before light, when the frost was falling, Meikle galloped in with a message from Napier to say that his party were going on to patrol towards Doorn Kop, where the enemy was said to be hovering. — seemed much annoyed to have been disturbed in his sleep, and gave no orders for reinforcements or help. Meikle rode back to Hibernia. In the night, which was very frosty, the patrol became somewhat scattered, and as Napier came in from an unexpected direction he was shot at by Meikle and had the narrowest escape of being killed. Napier told me he did not know how near Meikle's bullet passed him, but it was much too close to be pleasant.

A 34th patrol that went north-east in the afternoon was shot at from some kopjes.

Gibb, who was messing with Palmer and Morris, was carried to the general hospital in order to be taken down country. He suffered for weeks from rheumatism, until he became bed-ridden. Palmer, who is used to camping out, having done much of it in Canada and Australia, had been awfully good and patient, he nursed him with much







GRAVE OF G. G. GROUT, KLIP DRIFT NEK.  
(A Stone was erected after this photograph was taken.)



GRAVE ON THE VELDT, NEAR FICKSBURG.

*To face page 185.*

tenderness and solicitude, found luxuries for him, cooked for him, and tried to shelter him from the cold and damp.

G. G. Grout's grave was well looked after by his brother, and before we trekked from here it was a credit alike to his ingenuity and brotherly affection. A small square area, bordered with set stones, enclosed the grave ; this was bedded with small stone chips, and his troop nickname, "Rosie," was worked in on this groundwork. A headstone, carved as follows, stood at one end of the square :—

I.Y. 84  
G. G. GROUT  
Age 20½  
Killed 18th June  
1900

C. A. Grout told me that the Boers had sent into camp his dead brother's pocket-book, containing three Kruger sovereigns, and a letter that was found on the body, addressed, ready for posting.

In the last mail, Fowler, who messed for a time with Kelsey and me, remarked that he had had no letters by this mail. I remembered that I had seen, in the sacks, some deeply bordered with black ; he had not examined them, thinking they were not for him. He got them, and found that his old father had died suddenly some weeks before. We were all very sorry for our comrade. Another piece of news a mail brought us was the confirmation of Roller's commission. It was announced to the Company in line, and the boys gave him some rousing cheers, for Roller, with his unaffected sincerity and pluck, is much liked by the men.

Shortly after sunrise Napier's patrol straggled in, cold, July 12.  
famished, weary, and disheartened, with a sense of having done a fruitless night's work. Faber and Edmondston were missing.

At ten o'clock I was ordered to accompany McDonnell and Davis for a patrol to the south. I was ordered to

ride Gibb's horse, which was quite done up and useless. By the time we got to Mrs. Krog's farm the horse was so lame that I was told by McDonnell, who was nominal corporal of the patrol, to return to camp. We bought some bread and lard and some roasted corn coffee at Krog's (the Krogs are old Cape colonists). Two of Brabant's Horse, on a similar patrol, came in whilst we were there. Mrs. Krog had a great trouble to relate, about a waggon and some cattle that had been commandeered by our camp, and she asked us for a pass to camp to see if her receipt held good. We explained that we could not, as troopers had no authority to give passes. In the room where we took our coffee was a pretty little child playing on a pile of sacks of wheat. A coffee mill was fastened to the wall, and in that was laboriously ground such grain as she used for bread-making. She made quite a small fortune out of bread, which was of fair quality, by supplying it at a high price to the various camps. She also baked the ration flour of the officers into bread. They had, in the same room, a large house-dog, a fox terrier, a cat, a hen (very much at home), a pet lamb, and passing in and out, several Krog children and two quadroon girls. Davis and McDonnell continued their patrol a mile or two farther south, while I returned on foot. I had much trouble in getting the lame horse back to camp, for he now walked with the greatest difficulty. Half way in I sat down in the sun for half an hour and rested the horse and wrote up my diary. I got back to camp about one o'clock and found it humming with excitement, for orders had been issued to trek at 2.15 p.m.—no one knew whither. I immediately proceeded to pack my kit, and saddle my little mare, with an extra blanket, for her back was rather sore where it had been cut.

A roll of 34th men who had reached Klip Nek Camp was as follows—as correct a list as possible. Those riding in the ranks, *i.e.*, firing line at this date, are marked “\*.” Orderlies are so marked, but not servants, nor those on Staff work.

*\*Captain Brune.*

*Gun Section.*

\*Bickerton  
\*Campbell  
\*Canny  
\*Dixon (commanding)  
\*Day  
\*Evans  
\*Hall  
\*Oppe  
\*Stephen  
\*Smart

*Section I.*

\*Lieut. Roller  
\*Anderson  
\*Burrows  
Bower  
\*Baker  
\*Boughton (orderly)  
\*Bradley  
\*Banks  
\*Bell  
Cowan (C.S.M.)  
\*Clifford (orderly)  
\*Caldwell  
\*Cholmeley  
\*Christy  
\*Exshaw  
Fearnley  
\*Fortescue  
\*Frodsham  
Godwin  
\*Grout, G. G.  
\*Grout, C. A.  
\*Harmer  
Hobbs  
\*Heenan  
Hicks  
\*Hayward (Military Police)  
Herring  
Langley (R.Q.M.S.)  
\*Longley  
Lane  
\*Morgan, R.  
\*Mustchin (orderly)  
\*Ouvry  
\*Phillips  
Peacock, E. (R.S.M.)  
\*Paparritor  
\*Roberts  
\*Ralli  
\*Rhodes  
\*Smyth  
Shipley  
Smith W. H. (attached)  
\*Thornton  
Weedon, H.  
\*Wilshin, T. J.  
\*Wilshin, E. V.  
\*Walker, Geo. Allen  
Wilson

*Section II.*

\*Lieut. Newnham  
\*Blount  
\*Barrington  
\*Barton  
\*Corner  
\*Davern  
\*Davies  
\*Edmondston  
Edwards  
\*Faber  
\*Fowler  
\*Green  
Grumley  
\*Gibbons  
\*Gray  
\*Groome  
\*Gibb  
\*Horncastle  
Hunt  
Hagger  
\*Hearne  
\*Jacoby  
Izard  
\*Kelsey  
\*Luffin  
\*McIlwraith, J. H.  
\*McDonnell  
\*Meikle  
McKechnie  
\*Morgan, J.  
\*Morris, L.  
Marriott  
\*Napier  
\*Palmer  
\*Paterson  
Robinson  
\*Scott, E. C.  
\*Scott, T. A.  
\*Tomlinson  
\*Pyecroft  
\*Ridge

Not all of these men left Klip Nek this day: for instance, G. Grout was dead, Harmer and Banks

wounded and invalided down country, Gibb, Exshaw, Ridge and others had gone down ill.\*

Much to the relief of the camp, Edmondston and Faber turned up during the morning.

\* From rolls given hereafter it will be seen how rapidly Company 34 dwindled in numbers—who left, and who rejoined the ranks, and who remained. To those who came through the mill these roll-calls are eloquent of meaning.



## CHAPTER XII

### BUNDLE CLOSES IN

**T**HE summons had come very suddenly, at last, to <sup>1900.</sup> <sup>July 12.</sup> leave Klip Nek Camp, which we had come to regard as a sort of permanent post. With an interval, the break at Ficksburg, we had been here since June 2nd. There was hardly a man that had not collected little household comforts and gear of some sort or another, primitive shelter from frost, dew or wind, troglodytical contrivances, and kitchen utensils extraordinary. I could not but approve of the spirit that cast most of them away without second thought, it was soldierlike. We had learnt another lesson, that in war nothing is permanent. A quiet—it may be a sleeping camp—and there comes an order of a few words and instantly there is movement and change. I came into such a transformed camp—from the peaceful sunshine of the pastoral veldt to an atmosphere of urgency and press. I tugged Gibb's poor lame beast up to our officer to report. "What! another used-up crock! Turn him loose, no time to shoot him!" There was nothing to be done, so I took him to the outskirts of camp and turned him loose, and that was the last I saw of him. There were many of the great grey aasvogels skipping and curtseying in a ring a little way off. There were already furtive Kaffirs among us, rich and happy with leavings and refuse. It was a question, who would get Gibb's horse.

I had less than one hour in which to get ready for parade. When camps change frequently, this is more

than necessary. Now I was glad to get Kelsey's impetuous help, and I was ready well beforehand. With several others, in like case, I had to walk and lead my horse. Mr. Newnham promised that I should be one of the first to get a remount (a promise he fulfilled to the letter). We fell in punctually, and after one or two preliminary halts and delays we started definitely on our way about three o'clock in the afternoon. From all accounts obtainable we were abandoning for good this old camp with all its trenches, sangars, stone wall picket defences and the rest, to take up a position farther in among the hills; in fact, we were closing in on the Boer position. That was the word that went about. At Middlesex Kopje we waited an hour. Brabant's Horse were also "pulling up stakes." We then passed on by the ridges under which we had stood under fire on June 13th and 16th. There were now apparently no Boers about, and we presently turned up the narrow valley north, where Harmer's scouting party had come to such grief. The Leinsters and two guns of the artillery were marching with us, and one wondered that the scattered units about the Nek should make so long a line. We went on, passing traces of Boer laagers, and presently we found our road merged into a large ploughed field at the bottom of the hoek or valley. Many of the ox waggons stalled, the evening fell very chilly, and we endured a long wait in the cold, bright moonlight, now and then lending a shoulder to a waggon, or watching the long spans of patient oxen making unsuccessful wriggling rushes against their unyielding yokes, obedient to the sound of the fearful screams of their Kaffir drivers or compelled by the sting of the long whips to fiercer effort. At last we pitched our camp about nine miles from Klip Nek Camp north-east by east (about).

July 14.

We awoke and found that we were camping in the midst of many signs of the late Boer laager. A patrol was ordered out early, all available men, or I should say available horses of Section II. were ordered to fall in; only seventeen horses were accounted fit, and Napier took

charge. They remained out, patrolling southward, until the afternoon. They captured a waggon, full of mealies, and the oxen. They were fired at from a distance, but no one was injured. I was stable guard for a turn, and in the afternoon, as the ground was damp and unfit, we changed camp to a quarter of a mile farther up the slope, north-east, hoping to find that situation more suitable, but it was worse if anything, and, being in a narrow kloof or cañon, the sun had not enough time to dry out the frost and dew from the rank grass.

In the evening I was warned for picket post. Corporal Ouvry was to take charge. T. A. Scott and Jacoby were the others. Kelsey had a special order to come with us, with a pack horse, to take over kits, blankets, &c., to the post. Mr. Newnham was to place us. Just after dark we fell in, armed and cloaked. We had to march down and across the spruit, and then to the summit of a neighbouring kopje. In his short, business-like way, Newnham gave us to understand that the post was an important one, and that a sharp look-out must be kept. He came to us mounted on a quick-walking polo pony and bade us follow him. The darkness was intense, for the moon had not yet risen. It was hard work, in our cloaks, with a full bandolier, haversack and rifle to keep pace with the brisk little pony. We laboured across a soft ploughed field, tumbled into road ruts, fell over anthills and boulders, found ourselves in the deep gully of the running spruit, and waded ankle deep in its icy water to the other side, and scrambled, with a sort of desperation, towards where our leader was impatiently urging us to "come along, you fellows." The next that happened was that one of the party walked too much to the left and got bogged to his calves in mud, and immediately after we heard cursing, slow, deliberate and with deep intent, in the rear. I went back a little way, calling softly to the front to halt a minute, for there was trouble behind. I found a wild-eyed horse snorting in fright at the end of a tightly-stretched rein, the kits had wobbled

off and were nowhere to be seen. We soon found them, and got them secured in a pack, after a fashion, once more. Newnham ordered me to walk behind lest any of the kits should be really lost. It was no easy task that, we were on a path upon which only Indian file could be kept, and close as I walked to the heels of the horse it was so dark that neither horse, the leader of it, nor pack could be seen against the steep black side of the kopje, and only by bending down could I obtain a faint outline above the skyline. It was a terrible pull to the summit, but we got there at last, and we all went over the ground together to find the points of vantage for the guard, and a place for the reliefs to sleep in. Mr. Newnham and Kelsey went back to camp. I got first relief and walked for a while with Ouvry, up and down, until the moon, which was almost full, rose, revealing a scene of splendid grandeur. We could see that we were on a jutting kopje-end which commanded a view, in three directions, of narrow and deep valleys. There was the ribbon-like spruit below. A few flickering lights signalled, from camp and picket fires, across the shadowy gulf we had traversed. We could conjecture rather than see the khaki tints of rock and grass, amid the great burnt patches, for all softly mingled with the vast lights and shadows stretching over the huge, bold, rugged country. In turning in, Ouvry left me a little pair of glasses; he asked me to take care of them for they had belonged to a far-off great-aunt; that, in itself, was a text upon which to hang one's thoughts, quite like company on a lonely guard—a dainty pair of old-fashioned field glasses, with a dainty great-aunt to match—for I hold, having tried it, that in quiet slow-moving night hours, on a kopje-top, it is possible to have eyes, ears, every sense, keen and very alert for danger and surprise, and still to leave imagination free to supply an accompaniment that shall be as the strain of music to the scene in a drama. The end of the kopje was a rugged, precipitous cliff about a hundred feet deep, which rested on a rapid slope to the valley bottom. The


summit was irregular, floored with flagstones, immense and weather-washed, of Nature's making. The deep clefts would have made it an impossible range for a sentinel on a night less brightly lighted than this one was. In sheltered pockets and veins of soil, scant grass and herbage grew. The beat lay for about three hundred yards along the very irregular edge of the cliff, slippery and precarious footing, where one had to leap at times from slab to slab. At the very crest of the cliff was a group of boulders, and as I picked my way to these, on my first round, a sudden scutter from their dark shadows caused me instinctively to throw my rifle to the challenge, but even before I got it there I knew the laugh was on me, for such quick pattering could only be the feet of many sheep or goats, and as I hurried forward I found myself in the midst of the laggards of a flock. They soon became accustomed to my periodic visits, and even proved good company later on. Soon after nine o'clock, the end of two hours, I woke T. A. Scott, and after showing him the round, with Ouvry, I turned in. I now had a good four hours' sleep, and about one o'clock Jacoby, in turn, woke me for my second guard. "I'm awfully sorry to wake you, old man," he said, in a tragical voice, as if his grief at waking a man was almost too deep for utterance. "Don't mention it," I said, I fear rather rudely imitating his tragical tones. We laughed as I unrolled from the comfortable blanket. I dug Ouvry in the ribs and reported the change of guard. It was intensely cold, the coldest part of the night was now coming on, the white hoar frost was glistening everywhere in the high glaring moonlight, and it seemed to be created out of nothing as the minutes passed. I had to move rapidly to acquire even the semblance of warmth; I trudged and clambered restlessly up and down, never stopping except to scan the distant hills and valleys with the glasses. Ouvry (as Corporal) came out for a few minutes at mid guard, and just as he was making to turn in again I whispered "Hush! there is some one coming up the kopje." Slowly



and scrunchingly, we could mark the sound coming towards us. I looked to see that my rifle was loaded, Ouvry drew a pistol, and we waited. In a few minutes I could see a man who was picking his way up the kopje side; he was not coming from the direction of camp. When he had come within thirty or forty yards I challenged, "Halt! who goes there?" The warning echoed over the valley—an impertinence, an intrusion on the great quiet which had prevailed. A moment after, a cheery "Friend!" in Roller's voice; and when the military conventions, "Advance, friend, and give the countersign," &c., which the occasion demanded, had passed, and Roller stood with us, he congratulated us upon a sharp lookout. He had missed his direction, he said, in coming up. He did not stay long, and Ouvry once more turned in. This was a most unexpected visit, for the visits of our officers to pickets were very few and far between.

About three a.m., an indefinable change comes upon the spirit of the night—it is not morning, it is hardly movement—simply a stir and something fresh in the nostrils. The sheep and goats felt it and got up, making a pretence to browse. Geese in a farm far below cried to it their raucous trumpeting "gooick, gooack," up from camp the whinny and grunt of mules and horses, pleading for reveille and feeding time, could be distinctly heard. A few rival cocks of the neighbourhood argued as to the hour, each trying to keep awake long enough to have the last word. Foolish birds, how have they betrayed themselves into the hands of the men of Leinster! It was very cold, "the owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold," and I was in a wakeful mood, so I did not rouse T. A. Scott, my relief, for more than an hour past the time, and would gladly have done the whole of his turn, but that I knew discipline required that the guard should report to the corporal. I knew my relief was warm, and as comfortable as a stony bed would allow, and I also knew that I could not expect to regain warmth and sleep the right side of reveille. Two hours more and dawn would be truly

heralded; I made the most of it. At the first streak of daylight I jumped up and clambered down to the spruit to get a billy of water for coffee, broke ice in the spruit, three-quarters of an inch thick, and in rather less than an hour I had returned to the summit to find that a messenger from camp was there with orders for us to come into the lines at once, so that my labour was in vain, except that I was now thoroughly warm with exertion. In camp, the ration coffee was cold—but that was a little thing in the life of a soldier.

We returned to the lines to find that there was an order to change camping ground to a spot a quarter of a mile higher up. The valley was found to be far too damp and cold. The American Indian knows a trick that the English officer has yet to find out, that the hilltops and higher levels are much warmer in the night than are the hollows. It seems to be so difficult to teach, otherwise than by experience, the few simple rules of out-door life; civilised man has become much like a domesticated animal or a caged bird, at a loss when he comes to shift for himself again. We are now upon the lower level of the kopje tablelands; not far distant are three or four small farmhouses and a Kaffir kraal or two. It is Sunday afternoon, and I am writing this lying against an anthill, just outside our new camp. Our horses are grazing and sleeping around me, but I am not grazing guard to-day. Cholmeley is hard by, also busily writing. We can hear the constant roar of artillery, apparently towards the north-east, and we wonder what plans are afoot, what Generals are co-operating. We hear that General Rundle is within four miles of us, and that there is to be a constant movement of closing in on the Boers. To our east to north-east are the very notable landmarks of the neighbourhood, a peak with an outline like an inverted bracket  and a mountain with a large U-shape split in its end. They are the southern headlands of the Wittebergen range. They are very conspicuous wherever we trek in this district, and, I am told, they may be seen

July 15.  
Sunday.

from points as far as Senekal on one hand and Ladybrand on the other. We saw them from Ficksburg in a north-easterly direction, and Commando Nek, Malman's Hoek, Franz Hoek and General's Nek—favourite positions of the enemy—all lie within the "immediate sphere of their influence." Between our present camp and these great summits run lesser yet stupendous crags and bergs, called the Rooi Krans, also a Boer stronghold. Our present view is a much nearer one than that shown on June 15th from the Klip Nek neighbourhood. The firing seems to be in their direction. There is considerable activity not far off!

The running spruit, the course of which we are, roughly speaking, following, is the same spruit, from all accounts I can obtain, as that which we knew at Hammonia, and that which drives Mitchell's Mills, south of Ficksburg. I cannot quite figure this out myself, but it may be true. That the name "Mill Spruit" is common to these does not prove them to be the same stream. "Molen" and "Mill" are names commonly used to denote the streams by which mills are driven.

The world is very small after all. I find that some people I met on the borders of Mexico are friends and relations of Ouvry. That I should get news of "Don Carlos" out here!

Late in the afternoon all the men with available horses fell in to patrol over the south-eastern skyline. Many could not go. There was presently heard in camp firing on the part of the Boers and our reply by volleys. The patrol, which was under the command of Captain Brune, came under a pretty smart fire, and it did not return until sunset; a short while before that hour Brabant's men went out to support our Company. There were no casualties. About 150 Boers were seen.

July 16.

I had a good sleep last night; it was again cold and frosty. I always bivouac. I do not like the tents, not only because they become so stuffy, but because they

are the nursery of that plague of soldiers on active service, lice. "Is there no way you can get rid of them?" I said to a poor Leinster who was squatting naked in the sun picking lice by the dozen from his shirt. "Ah yes, now, d'ye see, if I wint out foive moile from camp, shtripped shtark naked widout any cloes on me, and laid me things out complately on the veldt, and then run loike hell, may be I'd get rid of some on 'em, but I don't know, d'ye moind."

We struck camp to-day and marched out at 12.30 p.m., continuing the line of march of July 13th, to join some forces farther in. The Leinsters and four guns of the 77th Battery of Artillery went with us. Napier had taken a small patrol out in the morning and had sighted Boers close to camp. He now joined the others that had fit horses, and 34th Company scouted for the column, a rather long one. We pitched camp about four miles east of last night's ground, and those in camp put up the tents for those in the field, who straggled in later.

I shall be glad when we get our remounts. There are all too few of us for field work. An excellent *mot* of Jacoby was related to me this morning. He was the single connecting file, and an order came for "the connecting files to spread out." Jacoby gravely said to the orderly, "I will unbutton my waistcoat and spread out as much as possible."

All the forenoon we heard continuous and heavy firing July 17. of musketry and cannon to the north and north-east, presumably Rundle's men. For us there was not much doing in the morning. At noon we moved camp to a coombe or kloof between two kopje ends, a mile south. In the afternoon word came that some of Brabant's men were being driven in by the enemy. There was an instant call to arms, unmounted. We all fell in very quickly, fully prepared, and scaled the northern kopje with a rush, an almost sheer ascent of about two hundred feet. Here, on the edge of the cliff, was a farmhouse, and Newnham put us in position within its kraals and

behind a dam. To the regret of the Company no Boers came to offer us battle, and we descended to camp. Some of the East Kent Imperial Yeomanry are still with this column. The Leinsters are scattered around about this position in pickets.

Late in the afternoon the Colonial Division under General Brabant came up and camped in and about the camping ground we left this morning.

I slept up among the big boulders on the kopje side.

July 18.

Last night amusement was caused by some loose horses getting among the waggon fraternity and their pots and pans. "Weary Willy," the cook, used language that was lurid with blasphemy. He rose in his wrath with an axe in one hand and a meat chopper in the other, but too late to prevent the horses from eating a week's rations of sugar and other stores?

In the morning I was grazing guard down in the valley on the outside of the kloof near the spruit. I watched with a good deal of interest the trekking of the long Colonial Division. I could see a couple of miles of the column winding out westward to a point in the direction of Hammonia. I understand that they are not going far to-day. This neighbourhood which, when we came into it a few days ago, seemed so quiet and out of the world, has developed into a centre of military activity. I counted sixty-five to seventy ox teams and Cape carts in one string in the column. There is abundant evidence of a great problem in solution, but what it is we are not told; it is not even hinted at by any one in authority.

Wide-spreading veldt fires are on every hand, and yesterday they held more than ordinarily an element of danger, for there was a stiff breeze blowing all day. The weather is perfect, a cloudless, lovely day followed the hard, white frost of last night. Except where the burnt patches are, almost everything upon earth is khaki of one tint or another; grass, rocks, boulders, kopjes, all are khaki of varied shades. The men are khaki. Only the horses and oxen, of every colour that obtains to them,



and the sky and the burnt patches relieve the prevailing tone. Even the smoke rises in big drifts of khaki against the blue.

The grasses of the veldt are of many varieties: sometimes they are long, or thick and matted, sometimes fine, sometimes curly: others are of a coarse or reedy growth which the Kaffirs call Tambuca, and use for their thatching, which is often neat and well done. There is sour grass and sweet grass. There is a pungent odour resembling that of anise about a certain kind when it is freshly crushed or grazed. Most of the farm barbed-wire-fence posts are of split stone, but we were fortunate in finding one small pasture with many wooden posts; but for that, I hardly know what we should have done for fuel. All these minor things I note because, sitting under a big boulder with sufficient of one's attention devoted to horses that will stray if the chance is given, the view is necessarily restricted, so much so that at times, as now, it is a relief to note and number trivial sights and sounds, as those accompanying the trailing convoy, the cluck of wheels, the screech of Kaffir, the crack of whip, and the bellowing of oxen—calls to lost yoke mates who laboured to the last tug with submission, and went down with large, wide, mild eyes, paying the last debt uncomplainingly.

There is other movement besides that of the column; there is the hastening to and fro of infantry and mounted men on various patrols and duties, and groups of men on fatigues, rations, forage, and such like. There is a litter of succulent, young pigs, hardly yet weaned, rooting around with absolute temerity. I see Tommy Atkins, from the corner of his eye, marking the covey down! They will be thinned at a more convenient season, no doubt. It would be as much as his scalp is worth to stick one now, with so many officers about. Just now there was a chase after a stray goose, many of our men joined in, but a clever Leinster lad bided what time the goose and his pursuers were winded, joined in fresh and captured the quarry.

At 4 p.m. all the men with available mounts of Section I. (34th Company) were ordered to fall in "in full marching order," and shortly after eighteen of them rode out under Roller to go across country, about twenty-five miles, to Senekal. Their absence will greatly increase the guard and fatigue duties of Section II. I was warned for night stable guard, and Cholmeley, who could not go with his section to Senekal, was warned with others for picket post. Cholmeley, who was not feeling very well, asked me to exchange night duties with him.

July 19.

Last night—a lovely moonlit night—I was one of a picket post at the farm on the top of the kopje. The site of the house was a vantage point from which could be viewed a wide stretch of the veldt tableland eastward. At night the permanent infantry pickets were supplemented by one from our Imperial Yeomanry lines. The occupants of the house took a more than usually hostile attitude towards the troops. We had rarely come across farms whose occupants would not sell anything they had which we asked for, if we but came with the cash in hand; money they could not nor would not refuse. The people here denied any advances from us in a surly manner, although it was plain that they had more provisions than were required for their needs. It was evident that this was a bad case of that type of farm against which General Rundle had directed his proclamation of June 30. Yet by reason of general orders touching these matters, if any man is caught commandeering, or even molesting such stores, he is very severely dealt with. It is a policy that must undoubtedly hinder a speedy termination of hostilities. Quite recently I have seen men ordered to give up chicken which had been paid for, and that at a round price. A preposterous sort of warfare this, that makes troops fight upon a hungry stomach when plenty is around. Every such farm is a depôt for the enemy. This place is a sore temptation to our fasting pickets. It was no charge of ours this night; we were simply a post or guard over the

Maxim and Gun Section which was entrenched by the kraal wall, but it was a part of our duty to challenge, and to inquire the business of visitors crossing our post. Corporal Green was in charge of our picket; L. Morris and Kelsey were the others. I was third relief, and it was a desperately cold watch, but that is anticipating. Kelsey, who had second relief, interested himself in supplies in the farm outhouses. When he woke the corporal and me, Green asked him if he had anything important to report. "Only a most unaccountable disturbance among the fowls," Kelsey said gravely. Kelsey waited for me to take up the guard at the gum-tree plantation hard by the farmhouse, and he secretly reported to me that he had bagged four fowls from a little eucalyptus tree, and that he and a Leinster picket, who had unexpectedly been drawn up over the rise by the sound of fateful squawking, had also broken into a storeroom where they had found "oodles" of fine mealie meal! This was good enough for very much underfed men—members of "the Starving Eighth,"—but it smelt of rank mutiny, not to speak of burglary, under the stringent regulations in force. Kelsey pleaded, bullied, and threatened, and taking the circumstances into consideration I juggled with my conscience, concluded that the general order must be wrong and not my comrade.

"Oh what a tangled web we weave,  
When first we practice to deceive!"

I had marched up and down my post a half-dozen times when I came near to taking a shot at a Leinster who furtively advanced from the far edge of the kopje. More Leinsters followed him—more than a half a dozen. I said, "My friend, this can't be done—go away." He said, "Please, sorr, we arr very hoongry." I replied, "But this is too thick." He mumbled something about "half a pound of flour and no fuel." "Ye wudn't sind us back impty now, wud ye?" He

added pensively, "There's some praties there, begorra." "You're a nuisance, a *confounded* nuisance," I told him. "Ah, thin, sure I knew ye wouldn't sind us away." I said, "Send those men down over the kopje—if they don't go I shall fire, and then there'll be the devil to pay with you all; you yourself may come back, and you may see what's there." He soon arranged with his friends and came back. I said, "Look here, Pat, this iniquity is too great for one watch to bear all by himself. You can take a bag of 'praties' and a sack of meal, and if you want more you must come in the next relief. If you come again on mine I should be sure to take you for a Boer." "That's handsome," he said. He dragged out of the dark a small bag of potatoes and ran with it over the edge of the cliff and returned to get the meal. He chose a small bag in the far corner. He shouldered it, remarking that it was very heavy, then he cleared out down the kopje. I thought that I should see no more of him, but in that I was mistaken; in about twenty minutes he came back to the edge of the cliff; he did not show himself, but whistled, *ffwooit! ffwooit!* I would not be drawn, and challenged him loudly. To my surprise he replied and then gave the necessary countersign. He brought out of the shadows, into the moonlight, his sack of meal, and plumped it down by me laughing, swearing, and out of breath. "Begorra it's cimint it is that's in the sack." I examined it, and sure enough it was Portland cement, which in the darkness of the hut he had mistaken for meal. He knew, he said, that the other sacks contained meal, "and I'm not after stalin' cimint; it might go harrud wi' me if I did; it's mate I'm after, and we must change it, sor." I was trying to keep from laughing, but I said, "For goodness' sake be quick about it." He lost no time in going to help himself to the right thing, and I suppose he got it, for I saw him no more. I was not guard over the house or farm, our post was an outpost only; that there was a farmhouse there was an accident of circumstances. That the occupants

were very anti-English and would sell nothing to us, and stated that they had nothing, were facts that weighed with me in the part I took in the incidents I have described. The Gun Section, sleeping by its Maxim, at one end of the sentry's beat, heard nothing of all this, or if they did they kept discreetly silent.

I woke Morris and turned in, but by reason of the intense cold it was a very restless four hours for me. I was wakeful, and glad when, from five to seven a.m., my turn came again. Everything—roofs, trees, and veldt—was glistening white in frost and the morning moonlight. The many lurid veldt fires, the accompaniment of my previous watch, had been frozen out. I now watched the dawn, one of the most beautiful I have ever seen, a stretching range of dark purple mountains, and thin, low banks of mist, in line against a cold sky of merged orange and daffodil, with one great morning star like a bright but fading lamp. Was it the passing glory of a "Bird of God"? Out to the ridge

"three times I went

To drink his beauty to my soul's content."

The sun delayed long as if loath to eclipse such an exquisite expression of loveliness.

At seven we rolled up our blankets and dropped down the boulder-strewn cliff side to camp. Kelsey and I had an altercation over the doubtful proceedings of last night, but after all I think his view of the case had more of commonsense in it than my own, and "what's done is done!" Besides, Kelsey's pot of peace smells so savoury after the eternal stewed mutton. I fear it is chicken broth, but we must not inquire too deeply! Think of hot, sweet porridge this frosty morning! Never, never more will I blame Esau!

We next fell in for stables. Bugle calls have been again discontinued; nevertheless, the men have to turn



out in line at 5.30 a.m. to answer their names, and may again roll up in a blanket for an hour when they are thoroughly cold. I was on water fatigue with the younger McIlwraith, and after that we had rather a lazy day. Disquieting rumours are about of British checks and of 1,800 Boers that have managed to break through some cordon of which we are a part; that the war will last at least another six months! It is said that Newnham may go to China—alas for us! &c., &c. The women up at the farm openly boast that they are confident of Boer victory in the end. "Neutral" burghers express themselves either less confidently or more discreetly.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HAMMONIA AND WILLOW GRANGE

**T**HIS morning Colonel Mitford and his Staff came from Headquarters to our camp with some more of the Division. This is the first we have seen of him for a month; he paid a hurried visit to Middlesex Kopje in June. We are on the move once more, this time back to Hammonia. 1900.  
July 20.

I was on waggon packing fatigue. My horse is still unfit, and I was ordered, with several others of the Company, to walk. A long column went with us. I walked the whole way to Hammonia. It was a long, hot, dusty march—the grass was hummocky and as slippery as glass—no firm foothold, which made the march a hard one for all; there was no real road, only, occasionally, old waggon tracks. The Leinsters and 77th Battery are with us. As is usual at the end of our marches, no one knew where our camping ground was to be. Every other unit was already settling down, we had to wait long and with such patience as we could command. It is our common treatment, and one so unnecessary—so easily avoided with but a little precaution, a trifle of solicitude on the part of our C.O. As it was, we overshot our camping ground by more than two miles, and we came into camp long after dark, the men hungry, tired, and swearing.

There are some worse off than those of us who are at least able to march, whatever our hardships may be. Several of our men are ailing, and four are ill with rheumatism. Bell was very ill, he could not move a limb,

and I was one of those told off to lift him in a blanket, helpless and stiff, into a waggon. I tremble to think of the jolting his poor limbs must have had! It was particularly painful to see him lying on the top of the kits, when the horses had to gallop, down and up, the steep approaches of the drift, the spruit crossing. R. Morgan is ill, and there is some fever among the men. While we waited in the road, to learn where our camping ground was, a part of General Rundle's Division passed down the Hammonia main road, in the direction of Ficksburg. They camped a short way on. They were the Scots Guards and other infantry, a battery of artillery and other troops.

Coming to Hammonia, we passed the Colonial Division camped at our left. In one of our flank guards Kelsey came to grief in a quicksand of the spruit.

Kelsey came into camp this morning; he and his horse were covered with mud. He barely managed to get his horse out of the quicksand, and when he did, it was quite done up. He was left far behind, and finally had to camp with the Hants I.Y. He was told a sad story there, of a young Hants Yeoman who fell behind his column, his horse being lame. Two Boers stalked him and shot him through the head. Some Kaffirs buried him and reported it. His Company went to see if it were true, the body was exhumed, and the Kaffirs' statement verified. So the story goes.

I was grazing guard all the morning. My mare strayed from the line last night and she could not be found.

In the afternoon Sergt.-Major Cowan read out to us the conditions for joining, and the inducements offered to join, the New Police at Pretoria. About ten of our men gave in their names (Palmer, Fowler, Hearne, Hagger, Robinson, Tomlinson, Davis, Patterson and others).

We were ordered to hold ourselves in readiness to go out to storm some hill, in the neighbourhood, in conjunction with infantry. This action was postponed.

We have come into touch with supplies: to-day we were served with full rations, the first time for a long spell. We were favoured with a double ration of beef and a ration of rum! Green finds himself confirmed as Sergeant, in Section II.

Newnham has been busy getting remounts from the remount kraal; Palmer and Tomlinson have been helping him.

We marched to-day, starting at 8.30 a.m., from Hammonia to Willow Grange. It was only five or six miles, but it was a long six miles for my mare and me. All available horses and men of our Section formed a portion of the advance guard. Newnham gave me a good-looking little remount, but I rode my poor dear little mare for the last time. All the work she can do she has done. I found her this morning tied in the Kent lines. She is on her last legs. I cannot bear to think of parting with her, she has done her duty so willingly, so faithfully and truly through danger and hard times. From Salisbury Plain to Ficksburg Plain, it is a far cry! Poor little horse! Mr. Newnham was very kind about it. He makes it a habit to know all about every horse in his lines, and values them accordingly. He said, "We won't turn her adrift, Corner, you must let me send her to Ficksburg." I did not ride my remount to-day because while he is a handsome, hardy little chap, he has a callosity on his back just where the bridge of the saddle would come, and I wished Mr. Newnham to examine him before I rode him, or I might become responsible for a very sore back. So Mr. Newnham made me one of the remount leaders for the day. I had three restless tugging horses to lead, and being in full marching order besides, I had one of the worst days of the campaign. We had two long delays at the drifts. This Willow Grange Camp is in a narrow valley or pass, which is the beginning of that narrower nek from which the Hammonia-Ficksburg road debouches into the circumscribed Ficksburg plain. The weather looked very threatening, and I took the precaution of reserving

July 22,  
Sunday.

my place in the tent to which I am "told off." So far, I have not slept in a tent.

Kelsey had been very loath to throw away the bag of mealie meal, and tried his best to carry it on his horse, but in galloping he soon found that impracticable, and cast it adrift. He was lucky enough to obtain a goose egg and four hen's eggs, which somewhat compensated him for his disappointment.

We have no means of arriving at the truth. The camp is full of idle rumours. We are as a people apart, of another world, hearing far-off echoes of things once familiar. One moment 34th are ordered to Ceylon with prisoners: another, Newnham is going to take us to China; all the Europeans of Peking are massacred! The next, the Boers, here, are on the eve of surrender, and now a big engagement is imminent: Broadwood is in pursuit of 1,500 of the enemy who have slipped through the cordon: Clements and Buller are closing in with many others. There is no end to the talk, but nothing to which a man may pin his faith.

I am writing this in the tent. Gray, Davern, Palmer and others are lying around, dead tired, taking a rest. I have just come in from latrine digging. I have had that fatigue to chance upon me pretty often lately. Day, good precautionary man, is digging a deep trench around the tent. The Kaffirs are screeching at their oxen and hurrying to shelter. Our horses are out on the hillside grazing. Groome's and E. C. Scott's are tied together with mine. The stable guards are Jacoby, Meikle, Morris and others.

We have heard nothing yet of Section I., which went to Senekal under Roller. They will turn up in a day or two, no doubt. Our Section II. has been a good deal on the move since they left. Our camp is on the banks of the same spruit as that which runs through Hammonia.

July 22.

Heavy rain came during the night. I took shelter in the tent—there were eleven of us packed like sardines—Corporal Gray, Palmer, Davern, E. C. Scott, McDonnell,



Fowler, Day, Kelsey, Morris, Stephen of the Gun Section, and I. The air was almost unbearable, the smell of damp, dirty cloaks and blankets, a stinking atmosphere that one could cut with a knife. I prefer my bivouac, thanks! Better a clean wetting than this, and the casual drop and drip on your nose or down your neck. "Never again!"

We had no orders for the field, but the Kents in the next lines were very early astir, out long before daylight. Thirty-seven of us of 34th Company were hurriedly called to stand by our arms at 3 a.m. This included the waggon crowd, who did not relish the move at all. Our coffee in consequence was not "up" until after 9 a.m., and then it was simply lukewarm, dirty water. Our cook urged, with some reason perhaps, that matutinal culinary operations were not consentaneous with military duties. I regret to say that his language was not of the choice order of that with which I have tried to define his grievance! He had a picturesque, if profane, way of expressing himself when in wrath.

Since 7 a.m. there has been heavy firing to the eastward, cannon and rifles, constantly. About nine o'clock our first wounded man, a West Kent, was brought in with a bullet through his biceps; fortunately no artery or bone was touched. The man who brought him in had his tunic shot through in two places. I heard that there were men wounded in the Regular lines.

I was one of the grazing guards this morning. There were four mounted and four unmounted guards; I was of the latter, Jacoby was another, and between the turns of heading off our restless horses we wrote, I, my diary, he, his home letters. The divisional butchers were, with ghastly dexterity, carrying on extensive operations in a herd of cattle on the outskirts of our grazing ground. Any matador would have envied the exact single thrust of the chief butcher. Each victim fell as if electrocuted. It was far more merciful than shooting. There was the usual audience of Kaffir and aasvogel greedy of offal. Over a dozen bullocks were slaughtered.

On the heights of one of the great encircling bergs was a Cossack post from 34th Company. They had in view the position of the enemy. Brune and Newnham, having no particular duty, rode out in the direction of the firing. I noted and pointed out to my companions a remarkable natural effigy in the precipitous cliffs above, resembling a knight in armour taking his rest.

In this camp there were more tents than I had ever seen in any one camp on the campaign since Maitland. There were one hundred and twenty in view from the grazing ground, and there must have been many more. The belt of level grass land on which the camp was pitched was not more than a quarter of a mile wide, and was bounded on one side by the deep donga of the spruit, and almost enclosed by the walls of great bergs.

It would be impossible for a number of men to be banded together, as we have been, without some earning sooner or later among the fellows certain nicknames. Here are a few that have (or *had*, one must sadly say of some) common acceptance in our company. "Treasure," "Father," "Cherub," "Sally Lunn," "Barclay Perkins," "Boscoe," "Micky," "Coby," "White Scott," "Black Scott" or "T. A.," "Daisy," "Rosie," "Aberdeen," "Weary Willy," "Stones," "Cardinal," "Cosy," "Mellins," "Brat," "The Kid," "Squash," &c. Any man who went about with a belt stuck full of such *bric-à-brac* as knives, spoons, corkscrews, and combination tools was called "Mappin" for short.

At 2.30 p.m. those of us on grazing guard saw that there was a sudden stir in camp, and in a few moments the Sergeant-Major was furiously blowing his whistle and shouting "Horses in!" We made all haste to obey, for we were alive to the fact that orders that would send us afar were liable to come upon us at any moment. So it was that we soon found ourselves, camp and all, on the trek eastward. In less than an hour we were ready in column for the march. This was an advance into the enemy's country. We went only three miles east, and

camped at a farm on a hillside at 4.30. Here, among the advance guard, there was a scramble for firewood. The heavy rain of last night had prevented us from procuring anything warm to eat or to drink, and the sight of good firewood was full of suggestion. There were some most exciting sucking-pig chases. The farmhouse was empty of everything and deserted. Immediately upon reaching camp six of us, under Corporal Kirby, were warned for a double picket post for the summit of a large kopje to the north of camp. Christy, Morris, Hearne, Horncastle, Pyecroft, and I were warned to be ready to go with Mr. Newnham at 6.30. Kelsey was again told off to take a pack-horse with our blankets. The trip up the kopje was very similar in its difficulties and incidents to the one I described at length on July 14th, only Mr. Newnham was this time afoot. Having nothing to carry, he outstripped several of the men. All of us were puffing and blowing in the race up. Mr. Newnham rallied the laggards sharply, but not unkindly. He had an indescribable way of hauling us very much over the coals without giving real offence, and of making us to strive to do better.

"Having first within his ken  
What a man might do with men."

Almost at the summit of the kopje we came upon a deserted kraal, where he posted us. The sentry-beat was a very long one, and two sentries had to march in opposite directions for two hundred yards or more and return to meet at a spot to be agreed upon. Newnham left us with many injunctions. We were right in the enemy's position, he said, and must watch, watch, watch! With that he bade us good-night and, with Kelsey, returned to the camp. The post had eaten scarcely anything all the day, and now with fuel and water we had brought up we cooked good, hot coffee. What a God-send it was! Morris and I got second relief, and we helped the first relief with their cooking. We

lighted our fires behind the highest stone walls of the kraals that we could find. During the first watches there were several sharp showers, but it cleared to an exquisite brightness and freshness towards morning. It was a long and wakeful night.

July 24.

Morris and I turned in from our second watch at 4 a.m., but at daylight I got up and made some hot coffee and found something to eat. Our third watch came from eight to ten, and we expected to be relieved by a new picket before that hour. At nine o'clock Morris and I stood together at a gap in an old stone wall. The morning was fresh and clear beyond description. We watched the camp, with its rows of white, pointed tents, basking in the quiet sunshine four or five hundred feet below, three-quarters of a mile away, the air so exquisitely clear and limpid that the scene had the appearance of a miniature close at hand. Hardly the minutest detail was lost. The curling smoke of cooking fires; the preparation of relieving pickets; the groups of horses, and now and then a man moving upon an occasional order. Nothing could have been more peaceful. To our left front we had a view up the valley towards the Rooi Krans, which was circumscribed by kopjes from two to five miles away. I was writing my diary, between scraps of conversation with my fellow-guard, resting my paper on a stone of the wall, and I had written the sentence, "In less than an hour we were ready in column for the march," under yesterday's date, when I heard the screeching of a shell and saw one burst in mid air, and about half a mile short of the tents. "Boers!" Morris ejaculated laconically. "Yes, yes!" I replied, with excitement. I don't know what freak seized me, but I continued my writing, and this is the mad thing that I set down:—"As I wrote the last word a Boer shell came across the valley and struck our camp—about one mile short. Another came!" I think it was that I wished to compress more than I was able to do in a short sentence, as if I had taken in the whole situation with the flash of

the shell, and was exultant over a fluke, like a small boy who has been missed at "cork-about": a sort of "Ah! never touched me, see!" or "You can't shoot for nuts!" After perpetrating the bull I crammed my paper and pencil into my pocket and shouted to the fellows in the kraal: "Guard turn out! The beggars are shelling camp!" We could detect no movement on the kopjes, there was not the sign of an enemy; but as shell followed shell we made out the vicious little spurt or jet of flame that betrayed a gun in action on a kopje from two to three miles to our left, due east of camp. While the first shell burst at least a half mile short, and could have been noticed but by a very few in camp, the second overshot the tents by a few yards only, and we could note the instant commotion that it caused.

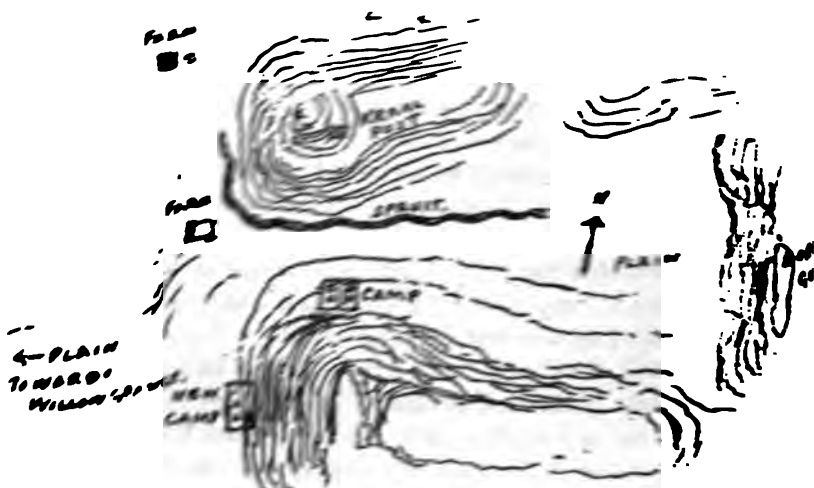
Considering the unexpectedness of the assault, the movements in camp, if hurried, were executed with less confusion than might have been anticipated. It was instantly seen that the first object to be aimed at was the removal of camp, especially the horse and transport lines around the foot of the hill south-westward. A couple of hundred yards would put them under cover. Before this movement was concluded several shells had pitched into the heart of camp, but, strange to tell, no one was touched. There were exceedingly narrow escapes, as there always are under such circumstances, but no casualty. One of the nearest shaves made a rather amusing incident. Our cook, an old Burmah infantryman, was just missed by a shell, which buried itself in the earth almost at his feet but did not explode. He thought that this shell would be a fitting souvenir of the occasion if he could but get it, so down he went on his knees digging with a long knife in the grass. As he was thus occupied a second shell struck within a few feet of the first, whizzing past his back with a spite that must have annoyed him, judging from the remarks he made at the time. Luckily for him, it also did not burst. These minor particulars were related to me when our relieved picket had returned to



## THE THE STORY OF THE SAME COMPANY. I Y.

and when the Boer gun had been silenced by our  
artillery from a position in the summit.

Morris and I still remained in guard, and most of the  
power of the explosion of these half-finished batteries,  
which commenced with firing by our remaining gun in  
the valley. Before the shooting began  
the gun was placed in the north of the line in  
view of which our gun was immediately with news that  
the two Boer guns were in our hands, making



Where Hearne reported two Boers.  
Farms at which Christy and Hearne fired.

their way west towards the rear of our line. We all  
hurried towards the north side of the summit and saw  
nothing, but around about a farmhouse, several hundred  
feet below, to the north-west were a small number of  
unmounted Boers moving, as if they had been excited or  
disturbed by the noise of the artillery. Morris and I  
earnestly counselled that they should not be fired upon,  
for there were farms in this neighbourhood that affected  
neutrality, but the sound of rifle-fire above and to the  
south of the camp seemed to excite Christy and Hearne





THE SADDLER'S SHOP.

To face page 213.



A WAGGON GROUP.

to the point of putting in a half a dozen or so shots, upon the chance that they were hostile. The men very quickly ran in or behind the house, and one came out almost immediately waving a white sheet, when our two men at once "ceased fire." The corporal during this affair was in our kraal below, receiving the new picket under Corporal Barton, which had just arrived.

The old picket now made all haste to return to the camp, filled with anxiety to find out what had happened to our own things, saddlery, horses, &c. After a long search, in a heap of miscellaneous things, I found most of my belongings. My kit valise remained where I had left it, and close by it, I found, embedded in the grass, the circular base of a shell. I judged that it was perhaps fortunate that I had been on outpost duty. One shell had ripped through a tent, and almost every shell must have passed through the tent lines. The Boer marksmanship had been uncommonly accurate and one had to listen half the morning to tales of miraculous escapes.

About eleven o'clock General Rundle and his staff rode in to inspect the position of our new camp, and he inquired in a very kindly manner of the extent of damage done. The wind was blowing briskly by now, and shortly after General Rundle passed through, a grass fire, which started at the officers' cook-house, roared fiercely up the steep side of the kopje. The Captain and a Sergeant or two shouted for the men to fall in with blanket or sack to fight the fire. It was hot, breathless, smutty work, this fire racing and fighting, up the kopje, but we got the best of it about three hundred feet up. In a wind these veldt fires spread with terrific rapidity, and with a roar and crackling that is alarming.

In the afternoon Roller rode in with the men of Section I. As they came up we gave them a ringing cheer, for we had begun to be anxious about our comrades, they had been absent since July 18th. They had now come in with a laden convoy from Senekal. They had taken with them empty waggons. There were twenty-

eight guards altogether, eighteen of Roller's men of Section I., and ten of Driscoll's Scouts. I think the trip was a very risky bit of work, and from the constant inquiries that went about before his arrival, I fancy others thought so too.

Newnham contemplated sending three or four men under Napier into Ficksburg for the purpose of buying a few supplies, and he told me I might join the party and take my mare with me. I was desirous of leaving her, if possible, with Challis at Mitchell's Mills. (See June 19th.)







A MORNING START.



AN ENGLISH MARE AFTER SEVEN MONTHS' WEAR AND TEAR.  
WILLOW GRANGE, JULY, 1900.

*To face page 215.*

## CHAPTER XIV

### HOW WE RODE TO FOURIESBURG

THERE was very little to do in the morning. There 1900.  
July 25. was an early rumour of movement which caused Newnham to postpone the trip to Ficksburg. One of the guides attached to the brigade was a Johannesburg photographer named Harris, and I got him to photograph my mare, and I paid him in advance for copies.\*

At two o'clock a very sudden order came to us from Headquarters to strike camp at once, and proceed by way of Willow Grange towards Ficksburg. At the former place we had to wait an hour, and in that time we found out that the movement was a general one. Troops came from all quarters of our line to this rendezvous. I was riding my new pony, having had my numnah cut, and my saddle restuffed with a hollow to fit the callosity on his back. But for that one blemish he was as good a little horse as I could wish to have—strong, willing, and fast. I was fortunate, for there were better men than me afoot that afternoon. Dear old T. A. Scott and Palmer were, through some misfortune, leading damaged horses in the column that day. "T. A.," who had the reputation that nothing could ruffle him, had a test put upon him by way of a joke by some of the men. Several, one after the other, asked him to lead some lame horse, until he had five or six; to each man he would give the same pleasant smile, or, "Why, yes, certainly, old chap; it's all in the

\* He duly sent the photographs to me several weeks after, and they were fairly good pictures.

contract!" Nothing seemed to down him or upset him. He presently caught us laughing, and the joke was disclosed. He enjoyed it just as much as the rest of us.\*

Under Newnham, 34th became right flank guard to the immense column on the march through Willow Grange Pass. It was very dark before we debouched into the Ficksburg plain, but we kept on and on, and the word went round that it would be an all-night march, and where we should find ourselves by morning no man knew. After Willow Grange had been passed by the whole column, we closed in and took up our place as part of it, with our own Company waggons. The roads were bad and very deeply rutted; they had in places become like small railway cuttings through the veldt, by reason of much waggon traffic and subsequent rains carrying off the loose soil. It was no surprise therefore to see some of the waggons capsize. Our own kit waggon was one of the unfortunate ones. In a moment Newnham was there, ripping out the ropes which held the cover. "Now, Corner, in you go, pitch out those confounded kits." "Now boys, put your shoulder to it, there!" In a half an hour we had unpacked, heaved the waggon bodily out, and repacked it and were on the trudge again with a "You men can think yourselves luckier than those poor devils of Kents; their waggon is broken down!" Two or three miles north of Ficksburg we came upon a camp; here an officer directed us on to a road almost in an easterly direction, and on we went, hour after hour, passing to the north side of Zout Kop (see June 23rd, plan), that stupendous block of stone, upon a pyramidal base of under stratum and *débris*, and upon the summit of which no man has ever set foot, so overhanging are its cliffs.

\* T. A. Scott's death was the cause of much sorrow among his comrades. He rode in the firing line, ill and run down, with the same happy serenity, up to five days before his death of enteric, at Winburg, December 30, 1900. Palmer became one of the most distinguished of the Company.

It was our first near acquaintance with it. We gazed up at it with a wonder mixed with curiosity, for it was from its omphalos that the Boer guns had so long commanded the eastward passes, and the greater portion of the plain of Ficksburg. We were skirting to the south of the Rooi Krans and Wittebergen. The southern ends of those great landmarks I described on July 15th: now their lower ramparts of great bergs loomed up at our left hand. The sky was all aflame with the glow of innumerable veldt fires. Clouds of smoke drifted over the mountain sides—we heard the roar and crackling of those fires near us, and they lit up men's faces, and made weird shadows, and for miles on miles we could see others rolling up the great hills in front, like wriggling, glowing, brazen serpents. It was a sight that filled us with awe, the remembrance of the furnace lights of Pittsburg or of Dowlais seemed insignificant by comparison. We went on through the deep, dark defile of Commando Nek, out on to the irregular valleys beyond, nearing the Caledon River. Here at two o'clock in the morning we halted. There was no camp, it was simply a halt for the purpose of feeding and resting weary animals for an hour or two. We got some horse feed, but nothing to eat or drink for ourselves; we were told not to off saddle, the horses were tied in line, ready for instant use, the men were allowed to get their blankets, and they lay down in the frost and slept like logs, for they were very weary. We had three hours' rest.

Reveille was at 5 a.m., and we were all ready in a few July 26. minutes for the continuation of the march. A little biscuit and water was all we had. We waited, however, for dawn and for the waggons which had to be loaded. The sunrise was very lovely; indeed, daylight revealed a most glorious view, behind us great battlemented bergs, close-topped beyond by a wild and rugged range of mountains. In front, across the Caledon, was the long, sierra-like range of the Maluti Mountains, with the daintiest sweeps, caps, and touches of snow upon their



dark-blue ground. Nowhere in the world had I seen such distinctive colours in sky and earth as in this treeless, rugged land. Such dark blues, purples, and violets of the hills, or orange, gold and yellows in such purity or fined to such attenuation. Roller came out of the lines to where I stood looking at the wonderful transformations going on in the dawning. He said, "It is very beautiful."

We started shortly after, almost in a northerly direction, up one great hill, passing through the white stratum to the higher red stratum, where the sands of the beginning of dongas showed many exquisite tints. Then we turned downwards, more towards the eastward, and at about one o'clock we found ourselves at one of Middleton's Mills, and here there was a rush of hungry infantry men to commandeered as much flour as they could conveniently, or inconveniently, carry. It was only a privileged few, and I suspect old stagers who knew the ropes, who were lucky enough to evade discipline so far as to be able to tote bags of flour on a forced march, or perhaps it was the magic permission of some kindly eyed C.O., or the passive sort of some little brother of his company, who was learning, like Nelson, to be blind in one eye when it was convenient to be so. However that might be, it was comical to see them, white as millers from head to foot, struggling for dear life to overtake their comrades ahead, rather than be ordered by the ubiquitous Provost-Marshal to "chuck it."

And now General Rundle and his Staff came up with us; he had been speaking to the miller, and he had obtained some moving information from some source or another. He was alert, very much alive, and as he saw our Company he passed an order for us to fall in as his escort, and away he shot, first at a trot, then at a canter, and by and by we fell into a steady, long-swinging gallop. A few of our men scouted on either hand, searching for retreating Boers, the rest of us in as open order as we could maintain in such rugged country and

at such a pace, immediately behind the General. Across two wide, rough, desolate valleys we pounded—halting only for a few minutes on high sky lines to take a hasty survey of the front, then on again as before. We were searching for Boers and a town, what town we knew not, or how we should find it, hostile or friendly. We only knew that we were going with our General, of whom we had seen so little, but whose influence, percolating the golden sands of upper crust, lighted upon the common clay of trooper or private at last, that we were glad it was *our* Company, and no other, that had captured this honour, and that we rather hoped there might be a scrap. At one brief halt Corporal Jack Morgan and E. C. Scott were sent back with a message, then on we tore again. Horses began to drop behind, then fell out; the pace was too hot and the way too long for animals already worn to a frazzle—one by one they were lost in the tailing, but the General and the rest kept on; and now, up on the hills to the right, we saw a little town, and somehow "Fouriesburg" was the word that went from man to man. There was a slight pause about two miles from Fouriesburg, at the bottom of a long hill or slope, and Roller, as having the best horse, was ordered back with an important message. General Rundle found the road we had taken was so rough that he desired to direct that the guns and heavy convoy should not come up by it, but should take the right or more easterly road. That Roller must have been disappointed to have to return I am sure, but he did not allow the shadow of wincing to cross his face, but turned back very much like a soldier. Then we raced up the hill into Fouriesburg. Newnham here took hold of a few men and galloped straight through the town to the north-east corner to a suitable place for an outpost, where he posted Davern, Patterson, and me. On the way out we passed an O.V.S. flag floating over a church, which I eyed with covetousness. Geo. A. Walker with good fortune climbed to the roof and got the trophy. Tomlinson, who was advance right scout, rode up to



Newnham and told him that Driscoll's Scouts, who had come by another road, already held a position just below but not in the town, and we could hear the sound of intermittent firing—but the Boers had fled. We saw a few on the eastern uplands, but they cleared, and in a few minutes we saw a column, with a General and a Staff at its head, coming in from a north-westerly direction. This proved to be General Hunter. Newnham sent at once to call in his outpost (for it was a multitude that was coming, and the outpost was no longer needed) and we saw the interesting and happy omened ceremony of Hunter joining hands with Rundle in the town square.

When we galloped in no English force was in the town, nor could I discover that there had been any in. By our coming, ninety-eight English prisoners were released, and we got a welcome from some few of the inhabitants of the town. We arrived about three o'clock. Eighteen of Company 34 arrived with the General and his half a dozen officers. The names of those of our company who were in the first flight are: Brune (captain), Newnham (lieutenant), Thornton, Ralli, Heenan, Burrows, Wilshin, Paparitor, Roberts, Walker, Rhodes, Davern, Corner, Davis, Jacoby, Tomlinson, Gray, Patterson, and Day, and a man named Stewart, a scout attached to us at this date. Roller (Lieutenant), J. Morgan, and E. C. Scott were sent back, and the following came up as stragglers, owing to their horses giving out: Napier, Green, Ouvry, Morris, Edmondston, Faber, Kirby, Hobbs, Bower, McIlwraith, and Groome.

We remained saddled, but with girths loosened, sitting about in one of the principal streets. A few at a time were allowed to go and see what could be purchased. "The early bird catches the worm." We were fortunate in getting plenty of good bread-and-butter and a little pork. There were no rations to be had, nor were there likely to be any; our waggons were yet far away to the south-west. Two old British soldier settlers, an old Black Watch and an old Blue, of the name of Green,

and their families, obtained boiling water for us for coffee, and other little luxuries. All this was delightful to half-famished men. Newnham presently took us to an empty house and told us to make ourselves comfortable, which it is needless to say we did. Jacoby's gentle gibe was always ready. He said we should have a "high pork tea," but correcting himself, said that a "pork high tea" would be better. Of hot coffee we again drank deep and appreciatively; tins of jam and sardines were contributed from saddle wallets, and a lucky few had discovered eggs, so for an hour or two we feasted. Many troops were coming up, but they mostly halted and camped in the outskirts. Of our Company there were now thirty. Some of us that night were on stable guard, but the majority soon rolled up in blankets on the floors and slept. All last night, it was said, the town was being evacuated by the enemy. I was told that some thousands of burghers went out in haste, under cover of darkness.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BRANDWATER BASIN

1900.  
July 27.

THE neighbourhood in the morning was humming with military goings to and fro. Fouriesburg is an unimportant little place built upon the foothills of the big bastions of the Brandwater Basin, about four or five miles from the Basutoland border. Eastward and south of east of town is a very remarkable and grand view down a long, wide, and deep basin or cañon. This is part of the Brandwater Basin. To right and left rise enormous, precipitous bergs and boulder-strewn hills. Some are square, flat-topped ramparts, others less abrupt, but not less rugged or forbidding. Here and there, in the hollow of the basin, are strange conical kopjes, surmounted by fantastic tops or capstones which represent the last defiant stand of the remnants of a protecting harder stratum against the sapping influence of endless ages of seasons upon an underlying softer stratum. About their feet wind deep watercourses and dry dongas, which have their sources far back in the lateral recesses of the basin, in hoek, kloof, and valley. Military progress through such a country is necessarily difficult and slow. It is a naturally fortified region. Positions are to be found there that might even be described as shellproof. For ambush or surprise, for command or defence of roads and ways, no more perfect contours could be devised. It was as if a wonderful and idealised geological chart of some far-off primal, treeless epoch were unrolled before us. On one hand



the heights of huge kopje-ends, as they fell down in regular succession on either bank of the Caledon, formed in perspective such a U, such gigantic portals, as could only baffle any merely human mind that would compute earth's history in years. It suggested Time, an eternity of time, and silence and indifference! It is a land of grandly simple elements—

“Wonderful to the sea's edge for gloss and gloom,”

and the sea is so far off, so non-existent, so impossible in this height and bulk of earth, as to seem but a legend and tradition, thrust back until wide room is left in the imagination for the mystery of morning gloss and gloom to extend.

Our Company soon received orders to saddle and fall in with other Imperial Yeomanry on the south-eastern road, towards the mouth of the basin. Here we halted for a while, until many other troops joined us from various points—Artillery, Imperial Yeomanry, and Infantry regiments—all marching in close order. The Scots Guards passed us to the sound of their pipes. Most of the troops went with an air of anticipation. Next the Yeomanry received orders for a reconnaissance down the basin. Thirty-fourth Company was the centre advance guard. The infantry were to scale the heights of the bergs to the right. We advanced for about five or six miles, and we could observe other companies strung out scouting to right and left. At one o'clock we halted on a ridge that ran across the basin, and that overlooked a spruit to our front. Captain Brune set out pickets and vedettes along this ridge, and the remainder, about twenty men, retired a half a mile, under Mr. Newnham, as a reserve. Mr. Roller was the visiting officer of the posts. E. C. Scott and I were told off for the central outpost. Our official style was, “Picket No. 2, Vedette 1.” To our left were Meikle and Edmondston; our right support was hidden. The reliefs were an hour off and an hour on—one to stand sentry while the other held the two horses in turn.

The horses were to be held under cover of the deep road rut or cutting. To our right front we witnessed a thrilling piece of work. A small patrol (not of our Company, but some Colonial Scouts) were advancing up a ridge close under the cliffs, when, as they came upon the skyline, they were met by a rapid fusilade of the enemy. Over a dozen men were under close fire, and there was nothing to be done but to gallop out of range, which they turned to do at a great pace. As they rode the fire continued with increasing rapidity, and we could see puffs of dust spit up from the ground about their horses' feet. No man was hurt, although several hundred shots were fired, but one or two horses were hit, one so badly that he fell. We saw the officer turn and give the man a strap to hold, and they soon got under cover together unhurt. We were just beyond range. Lieutenant Roller had warned them the enemy occupied those ridges.

This incident was a sufficient hint to us to keep our eyes open, and it was not long before the ping-pong of a distant sniper began. Roller rode by, down the line, urging us to be wary. Colonel Mitford and the Adjutant, infrequent visitors to our firing line, paid our little post a call, and as Colonel Mitford was questioning me, Captain Brune rode up, and the "ping-pong" sounded once more. "Dear me, Captain Brune, they must be sniping our pickets," the Colonel said. Brune did not reply. I reported that the enemy could be seen in numbers moving about in the front. Once more a "ping-pong" came, when the Colonel thought they really *must* be potting at Captain Brune, who was then standing a little way off. Brune here said he could see the Boers digging trenches on the opposite ridge over the spruit. The visit ended, the Colonel and his officers returned to the rear. Scott took a turn, and the intermittent snipe continued, but no bullets molested us, so not much attention was paid to it. What was much more interesting was that the Boers



could be seen, very plainly, by aid of the prismatic glasses Sergeant Green had lent me, moving very busily about with horses, oxen, and waggons, beyond a gap between a large conical kopje (Schoenseg Kopje) and some cliffs of a berg to our right front. I walked down to the next post and reported this to Meikle.

About four or five o'clock our own post was relieved by the new guard, Geo. A. Walker and another. They told me later that the sniper had subsequently taken the range more accurately, and had put two or three bullets within a few yards of them. No damage was done, however, to any of the vedettes. We returned to Newn-



+ POSITION OF BOER LAAGER ON JULY 27, 1900. WITH SURRENDER HILL BEYOND, AND SCHOENSEG OR "HARCOURT" KOPJE.

ham's reserve picket, which was on the veldt, close overlooking the main spruit or river where the principal flour-mill of this basin is built.\* The mill itself lay down in the hollow (looking east) a little to our left. The main road of the valley crossed the river a few yards above the mill, by a deep drift, through a plentiful supply of clear, running water, and turned up the opposite bank past the miller's house, which was near, but on a higher level than the mill. It was now nearing sunset, and none knew quite what duties the night would bring us, Biscuit and water was our fare that day. Newnham

\* See July 30, 1900, and February 20, 1901.

went in to see if our belated waggons were ever going to overtake us. We have had to hustle for ourselves, for the past few days, but in spite of hardship, strenuous work, and no rations, the time has been delightfully exciting, and thank heaven the weather was superb! Where the reserve picket lay were the strewn evidences of a Boer laager.

After sunset we all received orders to retire to camp, which had been pitched about three miles east of Fouriesburg, on the bank of a deep spruit. It was a disordered camp to which we came back, belated transport, waggons, Cape carts, groups of men parted from their companies, convoy guards and fatigue parties hurried to and fro, and there was much shouting for lines and comrades. Not half of the full strength of our own Company had managed to keep to the front through the last two or three days' mill, and I do not know that the 34th were a conspicuous exception. Our Company waggons had not arrived, and all there was to do was to sit down in the grass, in the cold, and wait. At half-past eight p.m. our waggons, greatly to our joy, came in with most of our lost men. During late hours of the night the sound of arriving and moving transport could be heard.

July 23.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

The divisions were soon on the march, advancing over the ground we had scouted and picketed yesterday. The 34th Company were right flanking patrol, which turned out to be a very easy job. We rode out and past the De la Harpe homestead, where General Rundle had made his Headquarters, and on towards the east. Our forces came in touch with the enemy shortly after ten o'clock, and by eleven the artillery was pounding away at a terrific rate at the Boer positions. The fifteen-pounders were constantly in action; their work was punctuated by the deeper "garumph" of the 5-inch "Cowguns." There soon followed an incessant rifle-fire. All this happened to the left front, so that we had positively nothing to do but to dismount and bask in the sun on the ridges under the great cliffs to our right. At times we could view the

artillery at work and the bursting of the shells beyond Schoenseg Kopjes and on Slaap Krans; occasionally we advanced a short stage. Newnham was in charge of us and, after placing the regulation Cossack post to our own front, he made several attempts, with Wallis, the veterinary, to catch some loose mules and horses that were grazing around a deserted farmhouse near by. One or two young horses were captured, but the mules were old and very knowing and gave us much laughable entertainment. Every way we knew, we tried to capture them, but like De Wet, they slipped through our cordons. I joined some raw-hide remes so as to form an impromptu lariat, but the mules would always keep only just beyond lasso limit.

By two o'clock we were very hungry. The firing was still going on, but lessening. Newnham went off on his pony towards the long line of convoy halted on the road to our left rear, leaving a Sergeant in charge. In an hour he returned in a Cape cart, with a couple of dixies filled with stewed trek ox. This was our dinner. It was a kind and considerate act on his part, and it was highly appreciated by the men. It seemed to be his theory that half-starved men could not do efficient work. Soon after dinner the firing died down, and the immense column began to move. Upon that we advanced—on and past the ridge where we had seen the scouts fired upon the previous day. Here in an emerald-green field of young oats we startled a flock of sixty or seventy wild guinea fowl. Still advancing, Newnham sent a patrol of a dozen or so men, under Napier, to climb to the summit of a big berg, one of the far bastions of Bester's Vlei, which opened as a cañon to the right, in a direction towards the "Brindisi" crossing of the Caledon. From the summit we had a wide view. Far off at the bottom of the Vlei we caught sight of two Boer Cape carts hurrying for dear life. They were out of range, and we could not descend from such a height to pursue. It was evident that they were fleeing from some farm, for they could not







MEETING OF GENERALS HUNTER AND RUNDLE ON SURRENDER HILL,

JULY 30, 1900.

*To face page 220.*



SCOTS GUARDS' PIPERS AT THE PRINSLOO SURRENDER,

JULY 30, 1900.

## CHAPTER XVI

### PRINSLOO'S SURRENDER

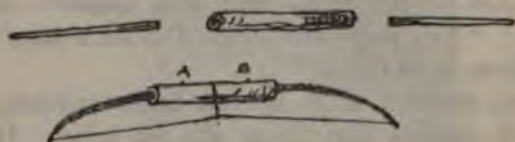
**R**EVERILLE was at 4.40 a.m., in the dark, and we rose with full expectation of continued action—but no orders came to us. We lounged about, and paid a visit to one of our 5-inch friends. It was a handsome and formidable weapon, and we did not wonder that the enemy was not partial to its lyddite shells. Water was very scarce and far off at this camp, and, in consequence, our coffee was as late as 9.30. Newnham, hearing of this, came around and raised a row “at the cook-house door,” and brought us, from his own stores, a tin of condensed milk for the coffee, which was a great treat. It came up greeted by a whoop from the Company. “Café au lait!” shouted one. “An’ what wud that mane?” asked a Leinster. “Aw, thot wud mane Cawfee’s late,” said a “Frinchman from Corrk.”

1900.  
July 29.  
Sunday.

We had nothing to do, no one knew anything. We thought it strange that there was no firing. Had the Boers got away? Surely not! Camp rumours had it that divisions under Clements, Paget, and MacDonald were in the neighbourhood, besides the two present—Hunter’s and Rundle’s. The 5-inch gun moved forward. We watered our horses, an hour’s job, for the watering-place was at a distance. There was time this morning to look around at each other, to see how it fared with our fellows. Some of our men were in rags, their clothes literally falling to pieces. Some of the infantry were even worse off, and, lacking trowsers, marched about with sacks after a Highland fashion. Newnham had a small camera and took

some interesting snap-shots. He came to me yesterday and said he had often seen me writing. If ever I wrote a book, he would, he said, send me such pictures as he had taken that would do for illustrations. My comrades frequently expressed themselves hopefully that I would hold that end in view, to publish a story of our experiences. This Sunday morning was certainly a lull in a strenuous whirl of activity. It was announced that a mail was going out by way of Basutoland, and this set many of the men busy. I turned to a group of Kaffirs squatting around a pastoral musician playing most primitive music on a most primitive instrument—a bow stringed-instrument played upon the principle of a "Jew's Harp." The wood of the bow was made in three pieces, a round hollow centre piece and two ends. The string was a thin brass piano wire which was caught up by a thread in the middle and drawn towards the wood-work. The Kaffir said that the wood must be of three different kinds and each portion had a separate name.

The instrument was held in the left hand at A, with the string outward, and the lips, with the teeth ajar, pressed at the point B at the back of the centre piece.



The wire was allowed to slip through the middle finger and thumb with a very gentle twang. Three principle notes were thus obtained from the two stretches of wire and the middle thread. The breathing of the player seemed to create a slight alteration in pitch. Sometimes for an hour a player would monotonously produce six half notes over and over again, in two or three different rhythms, a low lilting, harp-like sound that simulated the half-caught sound of a distant peal of bells.

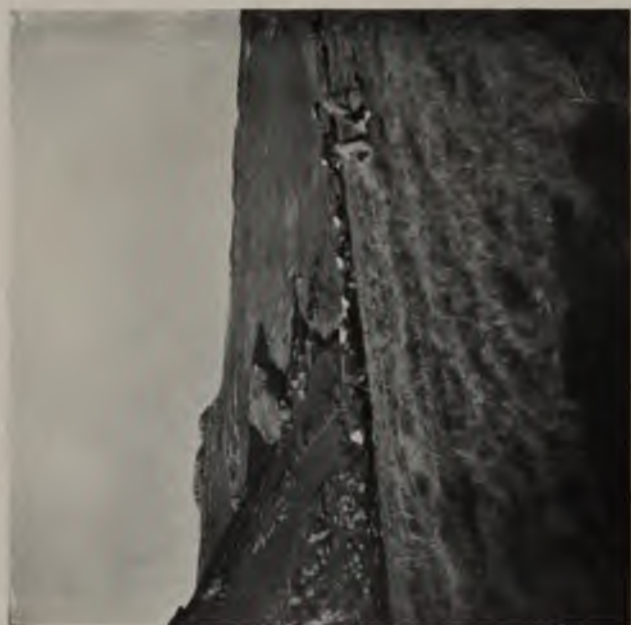
The conical kopjes scattered about this region are of







A MULE WAGON.



FIRMAN. PIDEAUX BRUNE.  
SLAAP KRANS.

many extraordinary forms. Besides Schoenseg Kopje, which we named Harcourt Kopje because the cap stone held a resemblance to Harry Furniss's caricatures of Sir W. V. Harcourt, there was one we named Ally Sloper for a similar reason. I made a graphic memorandum of some forms I saw of these quaint hills.

We were told to saddle our horses at 10 a.m. and then to off-saddle again. The weather remained perfect—all blue and khaki; in the mornings there is a veiling of mist—a slight, wispy mist that the sunshine merely plays with. There is a yeasty something in the air which tells of the turn of the year.

After dinner, orders again came to saddle, and we



immediately started as advance guard to our column. We only trekked three miles, but it occupied some hours, for the way was a rough mountain pass that could not be spoken of as a road. We passed many carcasses of animals, that, alive, had belonged to the Boers and had been killed by our shell; all these hills were strewn with fragments of exploded shells and the wrought-iron shrapnel shell of the fifteen-pounders. We arrived at our camping place at five o'clock. The evening was as perfect in the matter of weather as was the morning. We sat down to wait for our waggons. All down the pass the immense convoy of the combined columns was on the move—here and there a body would halt and occupy some position. It began to be whispered that the day had been

devoted to parleying, and that some momentous decision was being arrived at. On the ridge in front there was "something on." Each of us looked at the other with an air of expectation and inquiry. I slipped out of the lines and ran up the road; it was one long, rutted, weather-washed slab of stone. On the way I met a young Staff officer gaily riding down the hill. He was smiling to himself, and, as he passed, I asked, "Is it true, sir, that the Boers are surrendering?" With uncontrollable elation he shouted, "Perfectly—two thousand of them—Prinsloo!" I turned and bolted back to our lines and was the first to give the fellows there the news. We stood up and watched the effect of the word as it travelled from group to group down the defile. Cheering began, wild, persistent cheering, a long-hoped-for result giving tongue. The news rode out on the tide of cheer upon cheer, on towards Fouriesburg. With the dusk, fires blazed up—the occasion called for songs and a feast. "God save the Queen" rolled psalm-like after the cheers, taken up by groups and sentinels alike, until the great gorge and its walls answered in sympathy to the vibrating note of one joyful idea. Regimental bands turned out and expressed themselves satisfied in rampant music. There seemed no reason why "Rule Britannia" should not be sung and re-sung. The jubilation took no new lines to work upon, the old were good enough for that eventful hour, so "Cheer, boys, Cheer," and "Hurrah for the Red, White, and Blue," went up to the same old stirring tunes, and their mottoes were lustily and literally obeyed. This was Prinsloo's surrender, and by and by we turned in upon it and slept and dreamt.

July 30.

Reveille was early, and, for most of the Company, the morning was of a slow and intensely disappointing kind. Late last night an order from Headquarters came for the 34th Company to furnish thirteen men for escort duty to General Hunter, at the ceremony of surrender. Some of the men warned were of the very best we had, but a few were men who had no manner of right to partake of the







BOER PRISONERS, JULY 30, 1900.

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BOERS SURRENDERING ARMS, JULY 30, 1900.



honour. Sharp, resentful, and general, but short were the comments on part of the selection made. It might have been deemed politic to show a furbished front to a yielding foe, and to choose men whose clothes did not exhibit the marks of field turmoil. There were some of us who doubted the wisdom of such a policy, either as it affected friends or foes or the effective appearance of the escort of a fighting general. One thing we believed, that N—— had nothing to do with the matter.

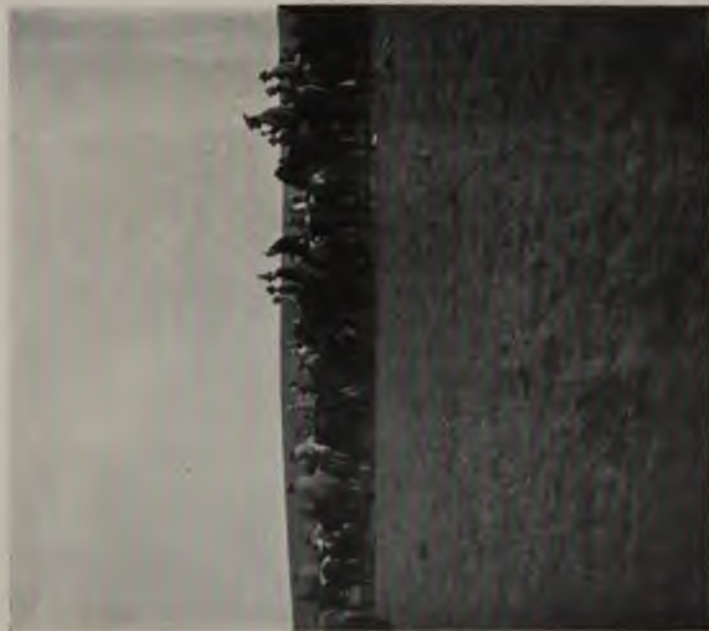
The escort rode up and over the hill. The rest of the Company followed later, and, with other companies, took a back seat on the Slaap Krans, on the summit of a hill that was already named "Surrender Hill." After a few formal evolutions, we dismounted, and lay along the edge of the road while negotiation or ceremony was said to be in progress over the ridge towards Roos' Damascus Farm, and while several regiments of infantry marched up in parade order and on past us to the occasional strains of music. There was a greater display of concentrated force than we had seen. For the hour, parade atmosphere weighed heavily upon us. It gripped too suddenly upon lungs that had been training on the ozone militant of the veldt. It was depressing and there was hardly any elation, although we knew that "out yonder," just beyond sight, commandos were slinking in and tossing deadly arms and ammunition into heaps for destruction. We caught sight of brawny artillery smiths with an anvil and sledge hammers. We guessed the function in which they were to perform a part. It was a simple but natural desire that stirred us for a moment when we exclaimed: "Ah! I should like to see *that*." It was the visible destruction and smash of the weapons of our enemies. Like other rebellious generations, we sought after a sign.

Most of us got the bravery of the show at second hand—the surrender of General Prinsloo in form—the submission of the adversary. Well, after all, we were there to work and not to play, and by noon a full commando came by with no arms, and they halted—a conspicuous group—just below us. We were called upon to furnish

guards as the Boers came down. We were not allowed to talk with the prisoners. They appeared eager to do so. They seemed most anxious to glean some information as to their ultimate destination. The prisoners, one and all, looked neat, and, for the most part, fairly clean. They did not appear as if they had suffered hardships beyond the ordinary ones attendant upon long treks. Of saddles and horses they had a good supply, and were better mounted—if on smaller horses—than we were. They were in civilian clothes, without uniform or uniformity, but coloured blankets and shawls lent an occasional bright touch to their assemblage. Some few of their younger men affected feathers, ribbons, or badges for their large felt hats. A few were belted, but, apart from these particulars, there was little to mark that they had been a military body. They held about them more of the appearance of the hunter than of the soldier, and many of the older, big-bearded men reminded me of venerable pioneers of the western prairies of America. There were, however, those among them whose characteristics were not so admirable, having traits of unfrankness and pert ignorance born of a little knowledge. One could guess that they had been flattered and favoured students of a school where inferior and not altogether healthy ideals obtained, where slimness and cunning passed for an acquaintance with things worth knowing, the makers of mischief rather than of a new nation. These were but a sprinkling, and the bulk of the next commando was of the better class. As they halted in the road, holding in check their restless little ponies, a tall, grave-looking man with a narrow, long, sandy beard, rode down their line, shaking hands here and there in the ranks. As he turned at the head of the little column nearly every man lifted—for a moment—his right hand and ejaculated a single word. I asked what it was, and I was told that Prinsloo was saying goodbye, and that the word was "General!"

Later, Boer transport and spare horses began to arrive and were ordered to outspan in separate groups. We had seen no guns, and it had been rumoured the Boers had eighteen.





A SURRENDERED BOER COMMANDO, JULY 30, 1900.



MORE BOER PRISONERS, AUGUST 1, 1900.

*To face page 235.*



## CHAPTER XVII

### WITH THE PRISONERS

THE sun was getting low on the afternoon of July 30th, 1900, when Newnham came around in haste for eighteen of us. "Get mounted!" and in a very short while we had several hundred prisoners under our care. Mr. Newnham was in command. He was here, there, and everywhere. He realised the responsibility, and gave us orders that we fully understood were to be obeyed to the letter. Rifles were to be held "at the advance" and loaded, with magazines charged. We were to ride in couples, at a given distance, on either flank of the column of prisoners. Thus began a weary march towards Fouriesburg. As we passed Schoenseg Kopje it was almost dark. The rifle weighed like lead in my hand. We had not practised this sort of thing since Maitland Camp. After a while my arm seemed not to be a part of myself. I would have given a great deal to be able to rest my rifle in the bucket, but Newnham was everywhere, keeping every man to the mark. The worst of it was that he was always in the right! Intense cold fell, and in a little while I was not sure if I had feet remaining to me. I suppose it was like many another long night march, but more so. We occupied nearly an hour in the crossing of the deep river drift by the mill.\* We travelled at a slow pace; the movement of such a column is as that of its slowest unit. At midnight we rode through Fouriesburg. A mile or so beyond, we found a camp prepared to receive

\* See July 27, 1900, and February 20, 1901.



prisoners. The officer whose duty it was to receive them kept us waiting a long time. During that time I had the opportunity of listening to the views of a tall old Boer, of French parentage, as he poured out a list of grievances. They had hoped to drive the British from the land and form a great Dutch State, and that they had not yet done so was the principal grievance, so far as I could gather. The Boers were not beaten yet. The war would be long continued, and in the end the Dutch must triumph. I reminded him that the Boers had done nothing they had set out to do. He acknowledged that many young Boers had taken their new clothes to the Natal campaign for the festivities that were to take place at Pietermaritzburg and Durban, when the English were "driven into the sea." He knew the trend of English politics. He did not like Chamberlain, nor Rhodes. The Duke of Devonshire was, he said, honest in his convictions. I said he would find others would maintain theirs to the end with equal honesty, from Chamberlain down; and why, I asked, had not the Boers listened when the Duke had so solemnly assured them that the British Government desired peace? He said nothing, and I answered for him that it was because the Boers desired war. He knew by name all his pro-Boer friends, they would influence English politics as before. I said earnestly that he greatly over-rated their influence. England would never again allow the possibility of such a war; she was in it to finish it for good. It would be hard for us to look upon the face of a dead comrade without cursing our hermaphroditic patriots. He asked me why I had come out; I told him to help see it through, and by God's grace there were many thousands of Englishmen and Colonials of a like mind—men who were not soldiers by profession, but merely citizens like the burghers, and who fought because they did not desire dishonour and disintegration to come upon the heritage of their fathers.

For an hour we waited our turn to go forward. We





BOERS AND THEIR BOYS COMING IN, JULY 30, 1900.

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A SURRENDERED COMMANDO, JULY 30, 1900.

had the light of a waning moon. The frost gripped my vitals. Like sheep at a fold, our charges were counted as they entered an opening in a fence, at either side of which stood Newnham and the receiving officer counting aloud. Newnham's tally was found correct and was signed. He was glad his men were nearing the end of their day's work. "Fall in! Fall in, there!" in his sharpest tone of command, and we galloped back into Fouriesburg. We halted at the Greens' house-yard. We divided stable guard into half-hour shifts for each man, tied our horses to empty waggons, and tumbled into a vacant house. I said, behold I will count imaginary Boers proceeding through an imaginary opening in an imaginary fence! I counted five, to the best of my remembrance. We had been nearly twenty-two hours on duty, in heat, cold, and hunger.

We were given a little grace, by Newnham, in the morning. He was up and about before us all. We started at 8 a.m. and trotted leisurely back to our old camp of Sunday afternoon (July 29th), and found it on the point of leaving for fresh ground. We marched about two miles to the east, and camped at a point not far from the Boers' late laagers. I now learnt that Palmer, who had led my mare on July 25th, had been ordered to leave her behind on the morning of July 26th at Gordon's Farm, east of Commando Nek. I now resolved to communicate with Challis about her, when I could reach him by post. My Hammonia remount was looking the worse for his week's hard work, and, as the callosity on his back had become irritated, I got Mr. Newnham to promise me a new remount from the captures from the Boers. I went in the evening up to the Boer lines and obtained permission from the officer in charge to choose a pony. The lot had already been very much picked over, and at first I despaired of getting a good horse. I walked over to an old Kruger-like Boer by a waggon, and asked if he knew of a good horse. He said, "No." I said, "But you have some here. There is one that will just suit me." July 31.



He said, "I want to keep that one; it is one I bred for my son." "But," I answered, "you have four good loose horses here, and each man has permission to reserve two only, and at the nearest railway station you will have to give those up. Now you had better let me have this little bay. I promise you I will take care of him." The old man looked at me for a while cogitatively, and then said, "Well, what you say is true; take him, and take care of him, if you please; he is a good horse." I said, "I will." I led him down to our lines, and straightway cut my mark on his near haunch. I found that my other pony had already been given up as unfit for service in my absence. Mr. Newnham came around later, and spoke well of my choice. He called my mark a "Stafford knot," and hinted I had better watch the Staffords if I kept to the mark. I pointed out the difference in the two marks, and he laughed.

August 1.

A very quiet day until noon. Newnham spent a long time in the horse lines, fitting saddles to the remounts, at which he exhibited skill, patience, and an intimate knowledge of the business. Every man was ordered to mark his new horse with a number; this was done by clipping the hair short on the outlines of the given mark or number. When this was carefully done it presented a neat appearance, and from a little distance there was difficulty in distinguishing it from a brand. It remained for me to add a "9" to my endless knot.

At noon ten men were warned for prisoners' escort duty under Sergeant Green: Oppe, Wilshin (T. J.), Faber, Edmondston, Hearne, Patterson, Horncastle, Morris, Kelsey, and Corner were ordered to stand ready. We presently joined about fifteen Leicester and Derby I.Y., under a young lieutenant of the Leicesters. We composed a guard for 250 Boer prisoners, and about 70 waggons in convoy for Fouriesburg. We were slow in getting away, and desperately slow when started. It was a most wearisome trek. It was dusk by the time we reached Schoenseg Kopje, and quite dark by the time all







**BOER PRISONERS: ONE OF THE OLIVIERIS. JULY 30, 1900.**  
*To face page 220.*



**THE PRINSLOO SURRENDER, JULY 30, 1900.**

had crossed the first drift to the Fouriesburg side of it. The officer in charge decided to camp here for the night. I think that the Boers themselves were very glad of this decision, and a speedy outspanning was made. It was as if we were with a Boer commando, complete but for arms and ammunition. They had their own ration waggon, and they "rolled up" for their rations of tea, sugar, &c., in line, very much as we ourselves might do in camp; their Quartermaster treated them rather as if they were a big family of children. Their Kaffirs laagered the waggons and watered and fed the cattle. The camp was soon aglow with cheerful fires, and we got supper, hobnobbing together. The Boers were better off than we were in the matter of food and clothing. We contributed what we could. Kelsey threw a fine chicken, which he had bought at a kraal, into the pot, and a little jam and biscuit from our store was something fresh to our prisoners. In return we partook of their biltong and hot coffee, and they offered the use of a big fire for Kelsey's chicken. We had tied our horses to one of the Boer waggons near the road. In the meantime the Leicester subaltern had agreed with our Sergeant that the night guard should be equally divided, fifteen of the Leicesters and Derbys were to take the first watch from 6 p.m. to midnight, the ten 34th men and five Derbys were to do guard from midnight to 6 a.m. The guards were to encircle the camp, to take positions about thirty to fifty paces apart, and patrol to meet each other on alternate hands. The first relief went on immediately after obtaining something to eat, while we turned in about nine o'clock, under the certain prospect of a bitterly cold night, for three hours' rest.

It seemed to me that we had hardly lain down before the sergeant of the guard came around to say that it was close on midnight. As I rose my blanket crackled with its coating of hoar-frost. We fell in, and immediately relieved the old guard. My position happened to fall on the road at the edge of the spruit

drift, the lowest point of all. If there were any choice I knew that this would prove to be the coldest beat; it was a matter of luck, for we fell out of the file in rotation as we marched around the line and encountered the different sentries. I will not dwell on this night's work too much; the memory of it will always be distasteful, if not positively painful to me. It was the most arduous work I had done in our campaigning. March up and down as smartly as one would it was impossible to keep warmth in one's body. It was a searching cold that kept my inwards a-shivering. The hours dragged. I ran up the hill to my nearest right neighbour, one of the Derbys, and back again, a score of times without stopping; then up the drift edge to my left, and return in the same manner, but it was of no use, the chill was that of a cold-storage vault. The camp looked a lost, dead caravan of an Arctic region, where silence and cold prevailed. Three sentries to my left, after much endeavour, managed to get a dung fire alight, and for an hour my Derby neighbour and I tried to follow suit; but we could not manage it: the fuel was frost-soaked and would not keep alight. We waved our hats with desperate energy over promising sparks, but the fitful beginnings of ignition persistently declined to be fanned into a genial acquaintance with fuel so repellant, and a night so unresponsive, so freezing. I paid a visit to my left neighbour and miserably begged a glowing ox-chip, and a big one with a curse to match, for it was horribly cold, and was given me. I brought it over to the road to my Derby acquaintance in triumph. We did all we knew to coax a flame; but the glow gradually died out, a sullen curl of smoke rose for a few moments, and then our heap was as lifeless as before. I tried no more, but made the best I could of constant exercise for the rest of the night. Several of the men huddled themselves in waggon-wheel ruts, half-stupefied by cold and want of sleep. For myself there could be no half-measures; had I given way but a little bit I should have fallen into a stupor, so I remained on my feet throughout. My right



arm had remained less cold than my left, because it had been more exercised by the weight of my rifle. My left was stiff and aching with rheumatism. At six o'clock Sergeant Green came around and knocked out alternate men, in order that they might get breakfast. I was not one of the lucky ones. I did not mind that so much, but when an hour passed and still there was no relief I began to feel aggrieved. It was broad daylight now. The whole camp was a-stir, preparing to trek. If I did not get a mouthful of hot coffee I should be ill. As the minutes dragged I became desperate. Five minutes—ten minutes—quarter-past seven! I could see, from the upper end of my now prolonged sentry beat, the lieutenant and the men, oblivious of how time went with the little ring outside. Seven hours and a quarter continuous guard on such a night! It was too much! Without any warning to myself, without premeditation, I put my rifle to the shoulder and walked into where the lieutenant was breakfasting, and, confronting him, I said, "Do you know, sir, that we have had seven and a quarter hours' continuous guard, and that, under almost any circumstances, that is against the Queen's regulations?" He was astonished, but he had the presence of mind to do the right thing. He called the sergeant of the guard, who was also breakfasting, and asked him, "Has this man left his post without leave?" I said, "Yes, sir." Then he said to the sergeant, "Take his name and return him to his post." Then he turned to me and said, "Do you think that I have had an easy night?" I said, "I do not know, sir; but no one has visited my post from midnight to dawn." There was wrong on both sides, and perhaps nothing justified my action, not even the agony of pain I was in. I returned to my post, and in less than five minutes all the old guard was relieved. We had barely time to get a mouthful to eat and a cup of half-warm coffee when the day's trek began.

We started on the road to Fouriesburg with the prisoners and convoy at 8 a.m., and arrived at the town

August 2



at 12.30 p.m. We were somewhat surprised to find there Colonel Mitford, who seemed to be in charge of the arrangements for passing on prisoners, for he gave orders for our little column to follow the Royal Irish Regiment who were going out on the road north.

I had many opportunities of conversing with the prisoners. I tried to get at their point of view. They all seemed to have been trained in a like school of politics to that of the old French Boer whose frame of mind I tried to outline on July 30th. Some of this batch affected a more truculent and boastful air. They still thought Majuba and Laing's Nek proved them to be the superior race. Some were dirty and of such an ignorant countenance as to cause an involuntary and pained motion of one's hand to one's forehead to make sure that the same curse was not lurking there in quite such plain characters. A few were inclined to be troublesome, and lagged behind, making belief as if they would be glad of a chance to escape. It was only a rude way of bluffing, but it gave trouble to the guards. One man continually bragged of his shooting; he could kill anything with his Mauser at five hundred yards. It was no use, he found, killing Englishmen; for every *one* killed, a *dozen* took his place. He could not quite make that out. "The English were to be driven into the sea"—that was always the burden and refrain of their aspirations. But his shooting—that was something to be proud of! I got weary of his iteration and insistence of superiority on this point. I said pleasantly I should like to see such extraordinary shooting, say a half a dozen shots at five hundred yards. "Perhaps the Colonel would allow it," I ventured. He seemed mightily pleased at that, and spoke of it to his companions. "Where should it be?" he asked. "Any-where where there was no cover and the conditions were fair," I said. He asked what I meant, and I said, with a pleased air, that the first man hit would acknowledge that he was the inferior shot. "Oh no, I didn't mean that!" he said. "Then," I said, "do not talk so much

of your shooting." I heard not a word of the subject from him afterwards.

But among them were many thoughtful men whose minds were filled with anxiety as to what the future held for them. Several of these pressed me for an opinion. They thought that they would be allowed to return to their farms in a short while, that they would not be sent away. I could see that they expressed this belief tentatively, if not doubtfully, and I told them that that depended very much upon the action of their comrades in the field.

Several of the commando were known to the women in Fouriesburg, and we noticed several greetings, encounters, and adieus. The little column went out northward, and as the road was a much better one than we had travelled all the morning, we made speedier progress. Six and a half miles out we came upon a large camp adjoining an extensive prisoners' laager. This appeared to be General Paget's Division, and we were told we were not far from "Slabbart's" Nek, and a Boer told me that this ground was, to the best of his knowledge, a part of "Swart Jan Fouries'" farm, from which I argued that Fouries was not an uncommon name in the neighbourhood of *Fouriesburg*, that there might be a *light* John if there were a *black* John. The Boer prisoners' laager was set about by many sentries and quarter guards. The prisoners, severally, had their lines assigned to them and to their horses and waggons. There were, everywhere, evidences that their care was a large order, taken in hand by trained and disciplined organisers. After our arrival we had to hold our own lot in hand until quarters within the laager could be assigned to them. This took some time, and we spent the interval lying out on the grass in the sun, watching a strange sight that must be from the nature of things an unusual, if not an unique, experience in our lives, and one to be long remembered.

We were freed of our responsibility at last, and, after a little delay in waiting for orders, we were allowed to

camp on the side of a hill to the north of the laager. All the evening the Boers sang hymns together. The "Old Hundredth" was an especial favourite, and they sang it with great fervour, but with rather a wearisome insistence. We were allowed to draw rations of beef, coffee, tea, biscuits, and sugar, and, as it was not yet quite sunset, we procured fuel and busied ourselves about what must be always uppermost in the minds of the greatly hungered—the appeasing of the cravings of the inner man. For the hour everything centred in that. It was perhaps to the fact that those cravings had been generously satisfied that I owed the strength of mind to stand with serene philosophy my ill-luck in drawing the lot for the stable guard for the night. Thirty-fourth was to furnish one, to the Leicesters' and Derbys' two men. The three of us drew lots for reliefs, and I was again unfortunate, for I drew third relief, 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. and 5 to 7 a.m. We had no lines or pegs to tether to, so each man used his bayonet as a picketing pin. Bayonets are easily jerked from the ground, so that, unless a strict watch were kept, there would be horses to find in the morning. That was exactly what happened. Coming on at third relief I was most careful to receive and give tally from my fellow guards. There were thirty-four horses, and when I came on again in the morning, the man who was to have aroused me at five came an hour late, and said that he had been unaware that the time had slipped by so! The hours of guard do not as a rule flit so joyously, and I jumped to my feet to count my horses, and five of our Middlesex ponies were to seek.

August 2.

As it was almost light I mounted my own pony and scoured the neighbourhood for two or three miles, and before breakfast I had found two of the missing horses—securely tied—in the artillery lines, on the summit of the hill. When I came in I reported the matter to Sergeant Green. Faber's and Edmondston's, two very good ponies, were still missing, besides another. I got a written permission from the C.O. to go through the

prisoners' horse lines, and spent half an hour there to no purpose. In the meantime Sergeant Green was applying for three or four new remounts from the officer in charge of the spare horses. The Leicesters started out without us. Now, the Boer prisoners were trekking, and I went to the head of the column to see, as they marched past, if our lost ponies were being taken away. I did not find them, and returned to get something to eat. General Paget and his Staff passed, following the column, almost through our lines. I started out on the hunt again. This time I was successful, for I found the two good ponies tied in the Queenstown (Colonial) lines. Faber's was even saddled and ready for a trek, but I soon substantiated our claim and galloped the deserters triumphantly into our lines, where I found that we were better off for horses than ever—Green having contributed two by his negotiations. It was too late to return them.

We heard that the prisoners were to be taken to Winburg, and from there to be trained down country.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ON TO HARRISMITH

1900.  
August 3.

OUR little party started back at noon on the Fouriesburg Road. On the way we met a small force escorting a couple of the Boer guns taken at the surrender. They were not formidable looking weapons, and were rather rickety on their wheels. They proved a disappointment to us after all the talk of captures of artillery. However, these may have been but a portion of one battery. One of our men told me, in connection with the capture of artillery, that he had had a very interesting conversation with the Scandinavian volunteer, Lieutenant L. C. Vald. Andersen, of the O.V.S. Artillerie. My comrade handed me this man's visiting card, and said that instances of the shelling of our troops at various times had been related to him, and that Andersen was heartily sick of the Boers. We trotted into Fouriesburg, where Sergeant Green, with what turned out to be admirable forethought, drew rations. We made a billy of tea and then went out on the road east once more. At Fouriesburg we had bid goodbye to Davies, who was in hospital with a game leg. Thus the strength of our Company dwindles, one by one.

We rode on as far as "Blackwoods," the farm of old De la Harpe,\* three or four miles from Fouriesburg. Ration drawing had delayed us in town, so that it was quite dark when we arrived at the boundary of Blackwoods, and we encountered some difficulty in finding

\* See July 28th.



the house. The father and two sons turned out and provided forage and a stable, and showed us an empty room behind his store—but for myself I preferred to sleep in the open air.

We rose at daybreak, fed our horses, and got our breakfast. I got into conversation with the old man, but found him the reverse of cordial, and short in his replies. I tried to draw him out by telling him that I was well informed of the story of the gallant doings in the early part of the eighteenth century, of a young French pioneer of Louisiana, who bore the name of De la Harpe. I said politely that it was pleasant to find family traditions kept up. He seemed pleased and interested for the moment, but subsided almost immediately into reticence. A few moments after, I picked up an old Bloemfontein newspaper, published in English, and read, not with much surprise, but with a certain indefinite enlightenment, a letter of a bitterly vituperative tone in regard to most things British, and it was signed "De la Harpe."

One would never have believed that an invading army had passed directly over this farmstead, within the week. It was a most astonishing state of affairs when one came to think of it. Here was a wealthy farmer and his wife and family, with fair daughters, and sons who had been on commando, and there were sons who were still on commando. A commodious house of free-stone, well ordered and comfortable. The lowing herd still lowed, both oxen and milch cows. The fatted calf gambolled, probably for the son still on commando, and there were sheep on the uplands, chicken and ducks rejoiced, perhaps they somehow knew that our old chums the Leinsters had gone by. The barrel of meal had not wasted, nor the cruse of oil failed, for the goodwife was here ready with hot bread and plenty, at 2s. a loaf, and butter at 2s. a pound, and eggs for the highest bidder. All this was magnificent, but was it war?

Methods of  
Barbarism.

We started out at 9.30 a.m. rested, fed, and cheerful.

We flattered ourselves that we had earned a rest, and had taken it. A happy little band! We travelled on past the Mill, past Schoenseg Kopje, up Surrender Hill, noting to right and left heaps of burnt ammunition and broken arms. The place of our camps was desolate, lonely, strewn with empty tins and the circular, blackened remains of extinguished fires. At Roos' Farm, Damascus, we found a belated portion of our army—a convoy that was to follow on the next day. We here drew rations of coffee and sugar and rested a while, making a fine Kaffir pot of coffee in the farmhouse yard. This homestead was entirely deserted, and presented many signs of destruction, but it was not all recent spoor, and I concluded that the place had been "gone through" some time before our army reached it. I here witnessed at a distance a transaction which will illustrate the frame of mind of both friend and foe in this neighbourhood: both alike thought and hoped the war was over. A Boer who was trekking back on the Fouriesburg Road met a soldier who was leading a lame horse about which there was but the question as to whether it should be turned loose or shot. The Boer offered three Kruger sovereigns for it. A bargain was struck, and both parties to this curious passage went on their ways rejoicing! Neither were off the ground of Surrender Hill! Tommy came down the hill whistling. I asked him, "Do you know an old song. 'The Wooing of the Widow at the Churchyard Gate'?" He said he didn't, and I hummed to myself,

" And little folk of little soul  
Rose up to buy and sell again."

After a short rest we pushed on through defile and mountain pass, over rugged roads, down into the basin of Walker's Farm, that resembles an amphitheatre,\* a square mile or two of flat that might be believed to be quite enclosed by high, precipitous cliffs and hills, but for

\* See June 1st and 2nd, 1901.

the knowledge that it is one of those widenings of a rivered cañon, and that the apparently walled-in place must have both inlet and outlet for the ancient and never resting shaper of the wild scenery around about. To inexperienced eyes nothing but some primal upheaval could account for this snug recess in the hills, for the deep spruit bed with its clear brook effectually hid itself from view from almost any direction a few yards distant. Our way out led up-stream, along the edge of the river-bank, past the farm with its little avenues of willows and poplars, on between the towering cliffs that guarded on either hand the narrow passage to the more open country of the approach to Naauwpoort Nek. On one of the summits to the right of the outlet of the basin a most extraordinary mushroom-shaped rock is balanced. Emerging from this notch in the hills, late in the afternoon, we passed on towards Naauwpoort Nek, about six or seven miles off, but we then had no idea of the distance. The road was better here, undulating over the foot slopes of a range of mountains to our left, while to the right was an uneven valley of great extent stretching south-eastward, towards the rugged and mountainous Golden Gate country; in front was another range of mountains, and the immense notch in it was Naauwpoort Nek. By the time we had got three or four miles on the way it was quite dark, and Sergeant Green uneasily looked about for a farm or some suitable place for night quarters. Not a light could be seen. Some one fancied that a flicker could be discerned up in the hills to our left front, and Hearne was sent forward to investigate, but once off the road he soon lost himself, and for nearly an hour we rode about searching for him, holloaing and coo-ee-ing until we were hoarse. At last, after what seemed an interminable interval, we heard a faint yell, and gradually we came up to him. Shortly after, good luck again came our way; we heard the sound of a moving ox-waggon ahead,

“with its guttering brakes a-squeal,”

and then we saw faint lights of tents and fires of a camp tucked away in the deep, dark, narrow pass ahead. We rode rapidly forward, and dismounted in the lines, and reported ourselves to an Imperial Yeomanry officer. There was a strong post holding the Nek, and we had overtaken some of the Leinsters who were in camp here. We obtained leave to shift for ourselves for the night, and we rode on a short distance to the stores of McDonald and Forbes, where we found two brothers named Thorold, who treated us very hospitably. They supplied us with horsefeed free, and a few eatables and fuel for ourselves, besides a storeroom and verandah for shelter for the night. We enjoyed ourselves hugely, cooking steak, chupatties and coffee, and by and by rolled ourselves in our blankets, full and satisfied.

August 5.  
Sunday.

We awoke at dawn to the usual crisp, clear, frosty weather, and rode up and out through the great portals of the Nek, whose pillars rise almost sheer on either hand, and emerged into what, by contrast with the terrific country in rear, seemed like a great plain stretching as far as the eye could reach northward and eastward. In reality it was by no means a level country, but a vast, rolling, billowy veldt, studded here and there with hills and isolated bergs and kopjes. To the right, or south-east, forming the border of Natal, or beyond it, ran the serried peaks and crags of the gloomy Drackenberg range. We continued on the Harrismith Road, and were presently overtaken by a galloping troop of Colonials. All around the veldt was burnt in great black patches. Just in front, east of the Nek, is a rather artistic monument to the memory of a few Boers who were killed in one of the early native wars. It was ornamented with sculptured trophies of arms; on its sides there were effective groupings in relief of assegais, axes, and shields of the native warrior.

It was easy to see that we were in the wake of a large, rapidly-moving column by the dead horses and cattle, the untidied camping grounds, the marks of fires, the

scattered empty tins, the fragments of worn-out harness, and the *débris* of broken waggons. The countless rounds of rifle ammunition scattered on the road, lost from defective bandoliers,\* and other things, were also signs that bore eloquent witness. Once we came upon the body of a poor dying ox on the road; one of our men mercifully gave it the *coup de grace* in the shape of a Lee-Enfield bullet. The original road was often lost in a wide swath of innumerable waggon and cart tracks. As we got more and more out of the shelter of the high and intricate ranges we began to experience the draughty, uncomfortable winds of the South African plateaux, and, at times, dust clouds enveloped us with great discomfort.

When we were on a high rise or hill we could discern, very far off to the eastward, the faint outlines of an immense berg. We were told that our road lay straight for that, for it was the Platberg that towered behind the town of Harrismith.

At noon we overtook a convoy, and we lunched with it. We saw R. Morgan here, who had gone into hospital at Willow Grange, and had now almost recovered from his illness and was following up the Company. Here, again, we saw the execution of one or two worn-out horses. It was pathetic this continual slaughter of helpless animals, that had struggled on to the ultimate tug. Continuing our march we arrived, shortly after four o'clock, at Groendraai Farm, where we determined to stay the night. This was a wealthy farmstead belonging to a Boer field-cornet named Gideon Blignant. There were women and children at the house, and they baked, for a price, our flour into cakes. There were a number of stables, barns and outhouses about the yard, and a cottage

\* These web bandoliers were found to be most unpractical; early in the frosty morning the cartridges were held so tightly that quick-charging was an impossibility. When it was dried in the sun, later in the day, the cartridges were held so loosely that a gallop invariably shook out ammunition that at any moment might become priceless, the ransom of a life. The amount of ammunition so lost would have gone far to make an army good shots, if used in practice.



in which an elderly Englishman named Cottle lived. There was a plentiful supply of grain and forage, and we made our horses comfortable. Morris, Oppe, and I called on Cottle, and in return for the use of kitchen utensils, plates, fuel, and night's shelter, we asked him to share our supper. We had managed to make a big billy of coffee when Oppe, with the best intentions, upset the whole over the fire. It was a slip 'twixt cup and lip! We were all vexed, but Oppe, I think, the most of all. With the fresh billy we simmered into patient mood once more, and, after a hearty supper, we turned in, tired with a weary day's march.

Cottle told me that he had for some years run a steam thrashing-machine in this neighbourhood. The farm, which, amid many poplars, firs, willows and fruit trees, nestled at the foot of a short kloof of a small, rugged mountain range, which ran south of the house, had been occupied by General Hector MacDonald, and the neighbourhood had been the scene of recent heavy skirmishing. Cottle said that he had given General MacDonald all the information he could. Blignant, he said, was one of that ponderously serious type of Boer which believed that a special intervention of heaven would be made to destroy the English in South Africa. He and several of his commando were somewhere about these hills. It was not long since that Blignant had visited his family at night and had come to Cottle's cottage, and asked Cottle to come and spend the evening with him, which he did, not daring to refuse, because Cottle knew that armed men were prowling about. He went down to the Boer farm and sat with the family until late into the night. The Boer was all the time declaiming that God was only trying the patience of His chosen people, and that all their misfortunes would presently be reversed. The field cornet then knelt down with his wife and made a very long prayer, asking God to overthrow the English and drive them from the country. Cottle said, "He and I have always been good friends, and, while he knelt and

prayed, I sat bolt upright in my chair, in silence, looking as stern as I could. When he had quite done I remonstrated with him and told him to be a wise man, that England would never cease the war that Boers had begun, until complete submission had been made." For years, Cottle said, an Englishman has not dared to lift his head in this country. The Boers believe themselves to be invincible, and the destined masters of South Africa. He was very weary of his situation as an old English settler, and should make every effort to return to the old country until the war was over. He did not relish the whistling sound of bullets about his house, as he had several times heard it lately.

About eight o'clock we started from Groendraai Farm, August 6  
still towards Harrismith. It was a miserable day of wind and driven dust, and the weather was very chilly. All the veldt was one vast, black-burnt desert. How glad we were of our cloaks! They got grimy and dirty, and the dust and blacks got into our mouths, eyes, and nostrils.

At 10.30 we came to a roadside store kept by two Jews. Sergt. Green bought mealies for midday horse-feed. All this long journey Green has been very thoughtful and generous, both to the men and horses, and we have had to thank him for several little comforts, in the way of butter, chicken, and bread, that he has bought for us, when he has found it possible to do so.

In the afternoon we overtook some of the Derbys and Kents, and about five o'clock we camped with them at Klerkspruit, about twenty miles from Harrismith. We had our lines separate from the other I.Y. troops, and, as there was no farm convenient, we had to picket our horses and set guards.

In the morning there were one or two Boer boys about, August 7.  
so that there must have been a farm hard by. The Derbys started a half an hour earlier than we did. We followed them at eight o'clock, and we marched for twelve miles in a misery of dusty discomfort similar to, but greater than, that of yesterday. We halted for lunch,

and then started on the last ten miles into Harrismith. The town is set at the north-west end of the long, great berg, "Platberg," that we had had in view for the past two days. So close did our goal appear to us that it seemed as if it would be only a matter of minutes to reach it, but with tired horses, and a continual wind against us, with clouds of suffocating dust, time dragged heavily, and, to our imaginations, the stolid landmark receded as we trudged along. About four o'clock we encountered a West Kent patrol, and they sent us on a wrong trail to the south of the town of Harrismith, where a large body of the I.Y. forces was camped, and where, they said, our Company must be. When we got to this camp we searched the lines over and over, with no success, nor could we obtain any information that appeared reliable, until one of us ran against a member of our Battalion Staff, when we learnt vaguely that our Company was "out there, in that direction," indicated by a sweep of the arm over the northern horizon, that we had better get to our quarters at once and not be caught in or near the town. Another told us that they thought our Company was guarding a bridge three or four miles north of town. With this not very encouraging information we started out at sunset to find our comrades, and after losing direction on the veldt, and crossing, with much difficulty, a deep and wide river-bed, we blundered upon camp about seven o'clock, long after dark. Somewhat to our surprise we found it to be a large one, and, upon inquiry, we learnt that it was General Boyes's Brigade. We greeted our comrades and exchanged experiences over the camp fires. They had not much of importance to relate, except that the army's hurried march from Damascus Farm to Harrismith had been an arduous and most unpleasant tramp. Reveilles had been at 3 a.m., there had been constant dismountings and halts and awaitings of the convoy's progress. They had arrived only twenty-four hours in advance of us.

## CHAPTER XIX

### HARRISMITH TO MILL RIVER

ONCE more with the Company, we had to shake down <sup>1900.</sup> to camp routine. We, who had been absent for <sup>August 8.</sup> exactly a week, thought it an age, and had begun to imagine ourselves "buckswashling free lances," as the "Laird of Lochlibo" put it. Of course our names were clapped down at the top of the roll for fatigues and guards, as is the custom of the genial orderly corporal when he is looking for fresh material for his persecutions.

"You might think it rather hard  
That you had to go on guard,  
But your arguments they wasn't any vally!"

From 6 a.m. until noon I found myself on stable guard, and subsequently one of the grazing guards over forty horses in a bend of the spruit. I got rather hungry, and ate a bit of half-cooked pork I had in my haversack, thereby acquiring a raging headache which lasted far into the night. Morris and Groome played the part of good Samaritans: one brought me at intervals cups of hot water to drink, and the latter surrendered one of his blankets to me. There was an awful frost that night, so that this self-sacrifice on the part of good comrades was not a little thing. I felt very ill and shaken, and I am sure that their thoughtfulness saved me from something much worse, for I was beyond taking much care of myself, and I was sleeping in the open. Early in the morning Newnham went out as far as Van Reenan's

Pass on the railway, and returned at night. While the day was not disagreeably cold, the ice in the spruit pools remained almost of a bearing thickness, on account of the frost of the previous night.

August 9.

During the night, sometime, orders came for almost instant marching. Reveille was ordered for 3.15 a.m. For two or three hours after reveille there was what was aptly described as "concentrated hell" raised all around. It transpired that two horses had been lost since reveille of yesterday, it could not be discovered by whose slackness or fault; that, between the time of the Company waggon and that of the O.C. there was a discrepancy of half an hour, so that the tents, especially those of Section II., were late in being struck. The air was lurid, and it was not safe for a man to look at his neighbour, much less speak to him. — raspily promulgated punishments, which cleared the atmosphere, for soldier-boys are much like school-boys, or those American patriots who believed that "if they did not hang together they would all hang separately." I daresay it was what is called a psychological moment. We heard, all undismayed, that "all stable guards and grazing guards since reveille of yesterday, and all the members of Section II. were to walk, leading their horses, in disgrace, behind the Company waggons; that, until further orders, no tents would be allowed to be pitched."

Though I had not been a stable guard, I had been a grazing guard, and I was also a member of Section II. As the weather was very cold, and I was still ill, I was glad to be allowed to walk, though starting in darkness and misery.

So I walked with others, with the convoy, leading my horse and a very bad pain. My little Boer bay remount, by the way, is all that could be desired and exactly suits me; he is good looking, good natured, very fast, and smooth in his gaits. My name for him is "Prinsloo." Daylight showed us that we were, in our northward trekking, leaving behind all those greater mountains



and clustering bergs amongst which we had lived so long. It was like turning round to wave a final farewell to old friends. The country in front was still rugged enough, in all conscience, but it was of an entirely different order. Here, from a rise, one could, apparently, see far over a vast plain, but between our point of view and the farthest skyline were ridges, rivers, dongas and spruits, low ranges of "krans," and here and there a kop, but the impression uppermost was the billowy khaki veldt, the expanse of matted, drab grass. The mountains and bergs behind us were becoming a blue dream, and a subject for song.

I do not know if I was looking particularly disconsolate and ill, but, presently, good old chap Napier broke in upon my ruminations with his cheery, downright, "Hello, cocky, what's this I hear?" "Oh," I said, "I'm much better, long walk's done me heaps of good, little bit shaky because I haven't been able to eat anything lately." He looked at me a moment, and rode off with, "Blawsted shame! See Newnham!" A quarter of an hour after Howard McIlwraith rode back to me and said, "— told me to tell you to ride, Newnham told him you had to; I'm in trouble too." "What's the matter with *you*?" I asked. "I came on parade with a Martini I got from a Boer at Surrender Hill slung over my shoulder; I want to get it home for a souvenir."

At noon the whole column made a midday halt at a point about twelve miles north of Harrismith. It was now warm and there was a wind blowing, and, as one or two incipient veldt fires had been put out with difficulty, orders were issued that fires were to be lighted only on the roadway. Our Brigade, spread out in full view in the bright sunshine, and with the long train of waggons, was quite an imposing sight. We had the 2nd Battalion Manchester and the Stafford Infantry, besides Artillery and Imperial Yeomanry. I dismounted with my Company and made some dried peach coffee. Meikle gave me this coffee in exchange for fire, for I had collected a lot of

good dry "bois des vaches." I fried some breadcrumbs in some fat in my little Kaffir bowl; this was the first morsel I had been able to eat since yesterday morning. Groome and Jacoby came over my way for a chat.

At the order "Get mounted 34!" I fell in with the rest of the Company, and I was immediately told off with Day and Blount, under Corporal Barton, for right advance guard. Barton took us out pretty far, and catching sight of a Cape cart and a horseman in the front, Barton sent Day and Blount to gallop ahead to see what it was, and we saw no more of them until we reached camp after dark. Barton and I proceeded with our scouting, and, presently, came upon a prosperous-looking Boer farmer, mounted. He told us it was his Cape cart we had seen. He said he had no pass, but invited us to his house to search for arms. He said he had seen General Boyes that morning, that the General would not give him a pass; he must, the General said, report at Harrismith for it. He told me, "I have been unable to go to Harrismith to-day because I had to help put a woman in the ground, just now." Explaining, he added, a neighbour had died yesterday at her farm. He brought us to his house, a well-built freestone erection, one of the best appointed Boer homes I had seen. A keystone over the door had the inscription, in bold characters, "A.L.B., 1898." I think he said his name was Breitmann, or something like that. His wife and several children all appeared to be in very ill-health. He told me, "I have had ten months on the veldt and I am tired and sick of it all." We had not been there many minutes before Section I., led by Corporal Thornton, galloped down the slope, and his men began buying anything the man offered, bacon, bread, and eggs chiefly. Barton and I pushed on three or four miles and lost sight of the column. We halted at a Kaffir kraal and got some Basuto women to boil some fresh eggs for us, and we got a good feed for our horses. We were able to buy some eggs for our sub-sections in camp. We attracted a crowd of Kaffirs, and they asked many curious



questions. Barton gave the old headman of the kraal some tobacco, which he thought much more of than the money we had offered. After a while, seeing nothing of the column, and dusk coming on, we made our way to a big kop about three miles off, and on the other side we saw, below us, the lights of camp. As I rode in, Napier came to me and said, "It is your turn for night guard, but I have put you on a couple of days." I thanked him, glad—for I was feeling weak,—sorry, for it was the first of all duties that I had been called upon to do, on this campaign, which I had missed doing.

Our camp was on the south side of a round, isolated kop, between the kop and the rocky bank and bed of the Mill River, about fifteen to eighteen miles north of Harrismith, on the Harrismith-Newmarket-Vrede road. There was a good iron truss bridge on stone piers over the river, which is a stream of clear water. It was running low, but the depth and ruggedness of its gully indicated that it had its periods of turbulent flood. On the north side of the bridge were a couple of stores and two or three farmhouses. The stores were bare of anything a soldier on trek might need, still one did not like to miss a chance of shopping on the veldt, so I bought a spoon to stick in my puttee. August 10.

We did not proceed on our march this morning. Reveille was called at 5.30 a.m., but no one, except those on duty, got up, for it was bitterly cold. Many rumours were about: that 1,500 English had been massacred in China; the King of Italy had been assassinated; 2,000 Boers had gone through less than two weeks before, on the way to Vrede, and that in consequence of this information we were to halt for General Rundle and his troops to come up.

In the afternoon our section under Newnham was ordered out on waggon escort duty. We scouted in extended order to two or three farms to the east and finally came to a De Villiers Farm, a very well ordered and substantial looking homestead. Pickets were left on

the surrounding ridges while the rest closed in as waggon guard, down a valley to the house. It was my duty to count the bundles of oat forage. Very good forage it was, and a receipt was given for two waggon loads. There were no men at the house, and the family were evidently of the better class of Boers. The mother sold us biltong, bacon, ham, butter, and bread. One daughter, a pretty and polite girl of about sixteen, played a harmonium and sang, while others brought us cups of tea and milk. The girl asked our Lieutenant to sing, and he good-naturedly sang for us "Hard Times Come Again No More," and everybody joined fervently in the chorus. We returned much in the same order as we came, but only arrived in camp after sundown.

We were paid thirty shillings a man to-day. I was warned for night stable guard, and got second relief.

189 11.

This morning Captain Brune, who, it seems, had lately been feeling rather under the weather, left camp with McKechnie for Harrismith. They went on medical certificates to Durban. We were now, after four months of service in the field, without one of our original Knightsbridge officers. Denman was unfortunate enough to fall out ill at Bloemfontein; Walsh at Bester's Flats; the Major—God rest him—was no more; Kennard was wounded; Colonel Kenyon Mitford had gone home on leave. We remained, less than fifty men in the firing line, under Newnham and Roller.

I had found the night not a very pleasant one, there was a chill draughtiness about the place. The rugged little kop seemed to be more of a pivot for winds than any protection from them. I was feeling weary with the night's work when I was told off for water-fatigue with Blount, four dixies to fill at the river, a half mile to drinking water, over rough, stony ways. The wind was rising. Stables were called. The horses sneezed at the dust from the great waggon tracks converging to the drift; they turned their tails to the west. Stables done, Blount and I went off with dixies, shouting to each

other in the wind, and swearing at the dust. As we gingerly came up out of the river gully with the full dixies, we caught the murmur of a sudden clamour in our camp and a sound that was something between a buzzing and a roar. The wind was now blowing fiercely. We instantly discerned what was the matter and prayed for our kit. A grass fire was sweeping through our lines from west to east. It was all over in three minutes as far as our camp was concerned. It was fortunate that the wind was so fierce as it was: had it been a half-hearted wind the fire would have spread from side to side, but the wind did not let the fire stand upon the order of its going, but hurried it on with an irresistible impetus which caused it to lick the khaki colour from a patch of the camp ground, leaving a long, wedge-shaped dash of black. Smoke, rush, dust, and fire passed on like the tail of a vanishing express train. Meanwhile, in our own anxious race to the lines we were handicapped by heavy, spilling dixies, and as a final pleasantry the wind lifted a shovelful of dust over us and into the water.

The fire had passed parallel with and just above the horse lines, sweeping along almost under the horses' noses. Ready-handed comrades had rushed among the kits and scattered them, far and wide, beyond the limits of the fire, but many of our possessions had gone up like tinder. When I had collected my belongings I found my two blankets full of holes, my helmet, haversack, and bandolier burnt, and worst of all my waterproof bag almost ruined. There was a little bewailing of lost treasures—especially, I thought, the little strips of Middlesex helmet colours—for many helmets were burnt—such power have ribbons over the human mind, from Garters to temperance badges!

The greater misery was yet to come. The wind by noon rose from a gale almost to a hurricane. The sun, which had been shining with a cold, steely brightness, was almost obscured by clouds of sand and dust—clouds that filled the whole horizon with a restless, yellow, brown



movement, and that which was being blown about could be seen to be of a heavier nature than mere vapour. Only overhead could the blue sky occasionally be seen. There was a tremendous fluttering of canvas, many tents collapsed; frantic men stood around others clutching at the ropes or scrambling or shouting for mallets and pegs. Oftener than not the efforts were vain to control the stays, and a collapse would generally betray that there were struggling refugees beneath. Having just done guard and a fatigue, I saw that I was not likely to be called for any duty immediately, so weighing my damaged kit down with stones I climbed with great difficulty to the crowning boulder-line of the kopje, shouting to Edmondston and Faber to try it for shelter. The wind simply blew one off one's feet, and hands and knees were called in for assistance. Even among the boulders the sand storm searched us out, but with less fury. From a boulder split, immediately overlooking the whole great camp below, I saw many strange passages and doings, and afterwards I obtained many curious explanations that had their humorous side. The scene was most vivid and exciting, and one I shall never forget. Men went about with wet eyes clogged with dirt, faces became negro-like, and the wincing shoulders showed how the stinging grit was blasted against ears and the back of the neck. Some of our Company built themselves walls and cairns of loose stones, or lay completely rolled up in their blankets for the rest of the day, if no duty called them. From my vantage-point I could see struggling orderlies come and go with long, blue, official envelopes from General Boyes's Headquarters. I saw a patrol bring in three or four Boer prisoners and parade them before the General's tent, and saw them surrender their arms in dumb show, all staggering to keep up a sort of formal dignity. A few officers on duty tried to set a good example. One walked up and down as if taking an airing, and tried in vain to look as if he "thoroughly enjoyed that sort of thing, you know."

One rushed to his lines and inquired, "why the hell the men were not taking advantage of a quiet morning and were not dubbing their saddles?" Another emerged from a rakish-looking tent, perfectly spick and span, with a "never touched me" kind of air, to be begrimed in five minutes like the rest. Older heads, less self-conscious, bent themselves before such a blast, and the men generally made no bones of their dislike of the storm and lay down in such shelter as they could find, and waited until it should be over. In spite of all this there was a certain camp routine which had to be gone through. Horses and mules had to be watered and fed, oxen herded, forage drawn, patrols, guards, and pickets to be sent out or changed. Fire guards were established and new latrines dug, &c., &c. I thought the sentry at the General's tent the most manful of us all, he simply tramped backwards and forwards, bent double, as best he could, unceasingly. All this murk, darkness, and discomfort was going on under a sky that should have been bright and sunny, blue and cloudless, but for the driven sand and dust. At times the darkness surpassed that of any thunder weather. Edmondston and Faber had taken shelter under the overhanging boulders, and after I had watched camp for an hour or two from a crevice I crept to pay them a call. I found the former in a deep sleep and evidently very cold, and I covered him up as best I could.

After sundown the violence of the storm abated, but the wind still remained chill and disagreeable. A sub-section was now required to go into Harrismith with despatches and Napier, Barrington, Faber, and Edmondston were told off for the duty.

## CHAPTER XX

### TO REITZ VIA GEORGINA

1900.  
August 19  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

AT reveille there was instant bustle in camp, for we were ordered to saddle for a march as speedily as possible, and we rode out of camp under the hour. Our direction was given as south-west, but we went north-west, in error apparently, for we turned almost due south after a couple of hours march and stopped on the banks of a running stream, in high, rolling, veldt land, about nine miles from Mill River Bridge Camp. The wind was still fresh but had much moderated. After an hour's rest we were ordered to saddle again with blankets and rations for horse and man for twenty-four hours. The little force that paraded consisted of the available men of the 34th and 35th Companies. We started at 3 p.m. with Newnham in command; Roller led his section. Leeson Smith, formerly a trooper of 35th, now a Lieutenant, was leading his Company. We went straight across country for six hours, in a south-westerly direction as far as could be made out, capping ridge after ridge, through dongas, by one or two farms, crossing the Wilge River, a lonely way. At sunset we rode through a big scorched patch at a canter, where we startled a plover from her apology for a nest. The nest was easily seen because the freshly burnt ground around was so black. I wondered how the little home had fared, in the fire that must have swept over it. Palmer, who was riding by my side said, "By Jove! how about plover's eggs for supper?" I said, "They are hard abroad." "Why?" asked Palmer. "She did not leave

the eggs until we were right upon her," I replied. He dismounted and cracked one and there was a dead young one inside. We then raced on and overtook the line. Newnham was pushing us on without ceasing; he did not tell us where we were going, he simply said, "If any of you fellows have to fall out on account of your mounts, make your way back to Kal Koen Krans; don't forget, *Kal Koen Krans*, that is where we camped at midday to-day!" After dark we struck what seemed an interminable piece of ploughed land. It was freshly broken ground, so that the furrow was very deep. We dismounted and we had twenty minutes of the hardest marching imaginable, made difficult by darkness and soft, deep ruts. It was not easy to keep in touch, and at the end of the ploughed land three or four men were missing, and there was delay in getting them together again. Further on we came to a road and at nine o'clock we cantered up to a store which we found to be Georgina, a place about twenty-seven miles a trifle north of west of Harrismith. It was only a country store, apparently on some Bethlehem-Harrismith road. The storekeeper's name was Betzold or Petzol; he was a German. There was little or nothing in his store to buy; the Boers, he said, had taken everything. Cossack posts and guards were set, and duty was divided as lightly as possible, and the horses, with plenty of forage, were tied to a fence. We were all very hungry, but we had our rations, and there was an abundance of capital firewood in the accumulation of packing cases of the old storekeeper. Every one was cooking, and with an eye for the morrow, which promised to be a hard day. Oppe and I cooked at the same fire. We had coffee, chupatties, and fried mutton. It was a very cold night and at about half-past ten Newnham came out of the store and to where I was sleeping, and said, "Corner, you can do with an extra blanket, seeing that yours were burnt yesterday; I'm sleeping inside and sha'n't need this," and with that he threw down his rug, hardly allowing me time to thank him.



I got about three hours sleep, and then reveille came. Palmer brought me a small bowl of pea soup which he had cooked during his stable guard. It was one of the most unselfish actions. It was bitterly cold and the soup was hot and good—he insisted on my drinking it.

August 13.

We started out from Georgina at about two in the morning, by moonlight and in frosty weather. Two or three men were unable to continue, one had been kicked in the ribs, and others' mounts had given out. These men returned towards the Kal Koen Krans Camp. We surrounded two or three farmhouses before dawn, but found none of the enemy, only a lot of startled women. We bought biltong and bacon. At daybreak we found that we had been driving a herd of buck before us, and we surprised many half-awakened birds and hares. Shortly after daylight we galloped down in extended formation upon Vinknest Farm. We had expected to catch a body of the enemy here, but only found an old farmer who was prepared, with a packed waggon and some cattle, for a journey. Posts were set, more cattle was rounded up, and the rest of the men fed their horses and got breakfast. The house was full of provisions, and Mr. Newnham made arrangement for us all to get bread and butter and coffee. Most of the men were able to buy eggs here, and a great potful was boiled in a very overcrowded kitchen. It was a big and typical Boer farm. The land was under fence, the fence posts formed miles of straight lines of young willow and fruit trees. We passed through a part of a farm named Strydfontein and then turned, in a south-easterly direction, back towards Kal Koen Krans. I was one of the right flank scouts with Barton, Groome, and Lunn. We galloped after a mounted man, who proved to be a startled Kaffir. He rode far to the right flank; we did not try to run him down, for he was mounted on a bare and fleet pony. A few shots were fired at our left rear, but no damage was done. We took the old Boer along as a prisoner. We were now returning in a south-easterly direction to find



our column, and towards noon we met the advance guard of the Division. Shortly after, we halted by our waggons, which Mr. Newnham ordered to outspan. Some coffee and other rations were served out, and the men and horses were given an hour or two's rest. In the thirty-six hours, we had made an encircling reconnaissance of eighty miles, accomplishing little beyond proving that the country was comparatively clear of the enemy. After the rest we jogged gently, nine miles, after the column, in a north-westerly direction, and arrived in camp at 6.30 p.m., not far from Stryd-fontein, in fact, on the farm of the old Boer prisoner. We heard that we were on the way to Reitz, that a lot of Boers were in our neighbourhood, and that they contemplated attacking us.

We were on the march, in the dark, by 3.30. A strong advance guard of mounted men was formed, and Oppe and I were made connecting files between the advance guard and the first infantry (Staffords) guard. Mr. Roller rode by and said he had just found an old soldier's medal for the relief of Chitral; it was a most fortunate find, for it was barely light. The name on it was "Pte. Clarke"—who was found later. Roller said laughingly, "It is not every one who gets a medal in the field!" Almost immediately after, an infantry officer told me to ride forward with a message. My horse was rather tender-footed, and in galloping down a stony hill, towards the advance, he fell headlong with me, falling heavily on my ankle. I was close by the Surgeon-Major when I fell, and as he saw that I had painfully sprained my ankle he ordered me to be put into an ambulance, although I pleaded to be allowed to mount again. He said he knew best, and wrote out an order, and for the remainder of the day I was a Red Cross patient. Oppe kindly took charge of my pony and things. It became known that it was to be a long and forced march to-day, and by midday we had come fifteen miles towards Reitz. We halted for rest and food. I climbed down from the ambulance and

August 14.  
Reveille  
2.15 a.m.

wrote my notes in the sun. The medical staff were lunching, hard by, and had roast goose. T. A. Scott brought me two hard-boiled eggs from our lines, which were some distance off. Oppe brought my rations and fed my horse. The morning had not been a very easy one in the ambulance. A man had been run over in the rear, and our ambulance had been ordered back some three or four miles at a gallop, and the bumping over rough ways was rather bad for us. When we got to the scene of the accident we found that another waggon had picked the man up. One of my fellow-passengers of the morning was a Staffords Infantry man with badly blistered feet. He held up for my inspection his only pair of boots, all worn, torn and patched, and the wonder was his feet were no worse than they were. He had a medal for the 1884-5 Egyptian Campaign, and was a Reservist. He had been an engine driver on a passenger train from Manchester to Euston, had a wife and two children, had saved a little money; his daughter, a child of six, had died since he left for South Africa, and the money he had saved was melting away. He was lying in the stretcher next to me, and he rambled on of his troubles, not so much complainingly as that his luck was running badly. By way of relief I got him to talk of Egypt, and he described in a vivid manner the death of General Earl and his comrades.

As I was writing my notes the doctor came and examined my foot again; he said he would take me as far as Reitz. I told him plainly I would not go into hospital for such a trifle, and would he allow me to go back to my lines in the morning? I told him that I had had horses fall with me before, and that I had never been very badly hurt. He said a pitcher that goes oft to the well gets broken at last. I laughed and said my horse wasn't a pitcher, he never pitched! "Ah!" he said, "you had better return to the lines in the morning!" Just after, Ouvry brought up young Caldwell, who had a nasty touch of fever—and I

found Meikle still in a bad way with his kick in the ribs.

After the midday rest was over the Major ordered me to get into a different waggon. I was allotted sitting-room for the afternoon. In the morning I had lain on a stretcher at the bottom of the waggon. It was a rough, jolting experience, of a kind not to be gone through too often, yet one I should have regretted missing. Many men came up pleading to be allowed to ride, some more deserving cases than others, but almost all of them claimed a certain amount of pity; tired, footsore, and sick men in a line; most of them were turned back. I know nothing so hard as that choice which the conscientious army doctor has to make on the spur of a moment, not so much between the deserving and undeserving as the discernment of the imperative cases: as, for instance, the man who has been marching along through stages of enteric and refusing to "go sick," and who once down is whisked off, sewed in a blanket, dead before he knew he was really very ill. Here, some were worn out with the long, morning march, and dismayed at the prospect of falling out by the way. A very few were given place in the already crowded ambulances—a few more were permitted to hold on behind the Red Cross waggons.

The ambulance I entered was divided in half, lengthwise, by a sliding panel or board, about twelve or fifteen inches high, so that two cases might occupy its bed. It had narrow ledge seats around the walls and sitting patients had some trouble in disposing their legs and feet so as not to disturb the patients who were lying on the stretchers. Spare stretchers hung behind the sitters' backs and to these we anchored as we bumped over hummocks, holes, and road ruts. There were several ambulances in this Field Hospital. A mounted lieutenant was in charge, and there were a sergeant-major, sergeants, and a corporal marching along.

In one partition of my waggon lay the man who had



been run over in the morning. He had fallen asleep on a supply waggon, and had rolled off under the wheels and had one leg badly fractured, and had sustained other injuries. He was a man of large and strong build, with a broad, common-looking face. He had a happy-go-lucky temperament, and when I looked at him with a sort of pity—not saying anything—a flicker of a smile played on his lips, and he whispered, "All in the day's work, mate." His face was heavy and white with the shock sustained, and the effects of morphine administered hypodermically. He was taciturn to a degree, and only spoke, afterwards, to ask for cigarettes, which he continually smoked. The orderly corporal made them for him out of newspaper and strong Boer tobacco, which the man kept in a tin he greatly prized. He seemed perfectly happy and contented as he smoked, and we tried to keep his cigarette straight in his mouth, and he seemed to resent the jolting of the ambulance as much for his cigarette as for his shattered leg and arm. As we re-lit his smoke and stuck it in his mouth, he would thank us comically with his eyes. By and by he fell asleep—a deep but troubled morphine sleep. Only in his sleep did he discover that he might be in pain—as we went over unusually deep ruts he groaned and moaned. Once I fear I startled the attendants by an exhibition of Western cowboy English, made for the benefit of the sleek, irresponsible nigger-driver—such vocabularies are not without their merciful uses, for our Kaffir chose his road better for a while.

Another occupant of our waggon was a mere lad—a round-faced, ruddy, country lad. He was suffering, he said, from pains in his head. He lay at full length on one side-ledge, and in a few minutes was fast asleep, and he remained so all the afternoon. He was the subject of many bantering jokes of the sergeant who occasionally visited us. I do not think the sergeant quite believed in the severity of the pains. To myself, from the good Major down, they were most attentive and kind. There were

two men holding on behind. One was a tall, very fair, straight young chap with an innocent look, but very determined blue eye. His face seemed drawn and pinched with endurance. He was very handsome, and would have made a typical guardsman. But the tragedy of our waggon was the other hanger on, a tall, broad-shouldered Newcastle man, one of the Manchesters. He looked like an iron-worker—a square-jawed, strong man with a closely-shut slit of a mouth and a knotted, wrinkled, troubled forehead. He was another monosyllabic sufferer. His complaint was summed up as—“light in t’ 'ead.” He was not used to being ill, and this was as far as he could manage by way of description. Muscular as he was, he looked sufficiently wobbly, and much more ill than he was able to say. When the doctor questioned him further, he said he thought “t’ chills ’ad gotten holt on” him. The doctor told him he might hold on behind, and when the mules trotted he might jump on to the step of the ambulance. The attending corporal did the talking for the crowd; he relieved his mind of a great variety of subjects, from the history of Norwich Churches to the different kinds of wounds and casualties he had taken a hand in. He said his chief knew how to keep men at work, and quoted the end of a speech his Major had made on their leaving England—“‘Those that do their work, well and good, but—’ and he shakes ’is fist like this,—‘he that fails to do his work—Gawd ’elp!’” Our Manchester had given no sign that he was listening—but he broke in savagely with, “That’s a threat. ’E cud a bin ’ad oop for’t; ’e’s no gentleman, and I knows him.” “Where did you know him?” I asked. “India,” he replied.

We had come, by this time, far over twenty miles since reveille, and the column was a weary sight. “Well,” said the corporal, “the General won’t have the cheek to give us a long march to morrow.” The sick Manchester broke in again, “Cheek? Cheek to do anything to us!” He seemed to find relief in this assertion, for he repeated



it over and over, varied with, "Great Gawd! Six hounces o' flour for a mon like me!" Then he plodded on in silence for about ten minutes when he suddenly lifted his head to the corporal and urgently and imperatively said, "Tell t' sergeant I can't go on." He spoke with a quick, jerky utterance and in a tone that is always recognised as having a reason to be obeyed. The orderly ran forward to the Sergeant, and the Sergeant spoke to the Sergeant-Major. The orderly seemed a long while—but he returned and hurriedly said, "The Sergeant-Major says that the Lieutenant will be here in a minute." "And thot's a minute too late, by Gawd!" He held out his hand towards me, with, "Gimme my rifle. Gimme my rifle!" He had stuck it in the ambulance under my feet. I quickly handed it to him. He clutched it, let go his hold on the tail-board, staggered two or three steps and then threw up his hands with a cry and fell heavily on his face in the dust,—his rifle clattering along the road. He was quite unconscious and the attendants lifted him very tenderly into an ambulance. So must a man do his duty to the limit. His going down reminded me of knock-out blows I had seen in prize-rings. My own hurt was completely forgotten in the absorbing interest of things, the drama if you will.

We arrived at our camping-ground about 4.30 p.m., after a march of nearly thirty miles since morning. The guide told us that the town of Reitz was over the next rise.

General Boyes was standing in the evening sun—a fine specimen of an English gentleman—watching the long column trailing in, and surveying the camping-ground, now and then questioning the guide as to different ridges and directions. The guide was in civilian clothes with just a broad blue band about his black wide-awake hat. The neighbourhood of Reitz is a continuous series of long, low, rolling hills well covered with grass. A big body of Boers, we learned, had passed through Reitz two days previously.

Newnham and Roller went out in the morning with their Sections to patrol around Reitz. I did not go. Newnham ordered me to rest my foot, which was quite painful. Camp was not moved. Our lines were along the edges of a string of water-holes. The infantry rested, and all the afternoon scores of them lined the lagoons, occupying themselves with clothes-washing and washing themselves and searching for lice. I felt horribly dirty myself, but drew the line at this rather promiscuous lavatory. A good comrade brought me a bucket of clean water from a guarded hole, and I got the first wash for weeks. We were able to get bread at 2s. 6d. per loaf from town. The patrol returned early, and then Mr. Newnham read out some Reuter's telegrams concerning Parliamentary inquiries as to the privations in Rundle's division and the "exigencies" of war.

August 15.

There were several mounted patrols ordered out in the early morning. Strong infantry pickets were posted on the ridges. A convoy came in for us, but there were no I. Y. mails. Napier and his party were still absent. We had been on three-quarter rations for more than two weeks, and they were stinted at that rate. Sugar was ordered to be issued direct to the men for the future, at which much satisfaction was expressed; it had been the custom for the cook to keep it for tea and coffee rations, and its sweetness was somehow wasted in that way. No biscuits were issued, only flour. The patrols bring in no news of the enemy. I found time to write a number of letters.

August 16.

Last night was our first warm night.

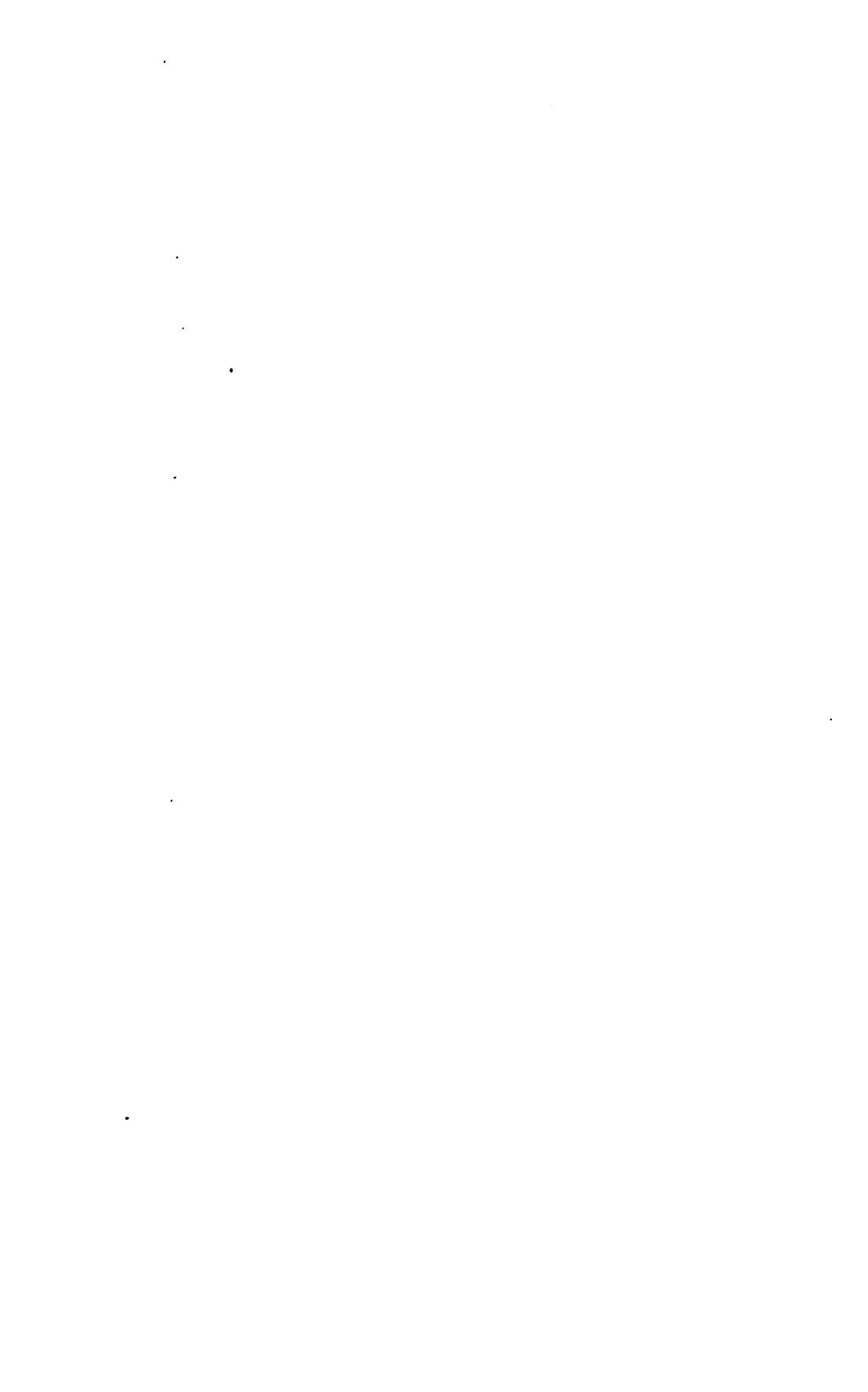
August 17.

The infantry pickets were entrenched on the ridges. A reconnaissance in force under Newnham and Roller went out, taking every available man. Ten were left in the lines. I had orders to remain. We made an arrangement to pay the cook two shillings to cook our meat and potato rations, but the Sergeant-Major forbade him to do so. I protested, for there was no fuel in camp except at the cookhouse. At four o'clock orders came to break camp and to proceed to Reitz town. My foot was much better,

but it was very painful moving about doing kit packing. We pitched camp to the west of Reitz town. Shortly after, the men came in from the reconnaissance. No force of the enemy had been seen, but three prisoners were brought in from a farm several miles distant.

August 18

Immediately after breakfast we were ordered to move camp higher up the hill west of Reitz. We had plenty to eat here, because we were able to buy bread, cheese, bacon, butter and eggs. Rations were irregular, and it was either feast or famine with us. It was a quiet day for us, only a few patrols and guards. The Sergeant-Major complained to Mr. Newnham because I had suggested "petty tyranny" yesterday when he had prevented the cook from cooking our rations. Mr. Newnham was not very severe. He told me I must not protest. The amount of bullying that an ill-disposed old soldier non-com., who knows the ropes, can bring to bear on those under him is simply inconceivable to outsiders.





A FIFTEEN-POUNDER CROSSING A SPRUIT.



A WAGON CROSSING A SPRUIT.



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE WILGE RIVER AND VREDE

**W**E had hardly begun the day's regular camp duties when orders came to strike camp, to leave at once. Mr. Newnham left me behind on the site of the lines to await a waggon which was out foraging under Meikle and Jacoby, also to await Barton, who had gone into Reitz for the bread, made up of our rations flour, also a patrol under Mr. Roller. It was late before I was able to deliver all the instructions and I rode out of Reitz alone, nine miles to camp, which I reached some time after dark. On the way to camp Meikle shot a buck and brought it in. About three miles behind the column I surprised an old Boer picking up the exhausted oxen. He showed me one or two signed passes and said he had permission! I passed on, wondering that such things could be. In the dark I lost my mess-tin from my saddle, but returning on my tracks, by great good luck, I found it in the road. I was warned for night guard, second relief.

1900.  
August 19.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

The whole brigade started from camp in a south-easterly direction, turning around in a great semicircle through an immense natural valley or basin in the veldt to the north-east and north. The advance guard of mounted men was greatly extended. Palmer, Tomlinson, Oppe and I were advance left patrol, 1200 yards out from the column and ordered to keep in touch with Gray, Groome, Blount, and McDonnell who were patrolling at 1800 yards. At ten o'clock we were ordered to gallop in pursuit of some Boers seen ahead. Palmer took us over the Wilge River to the de

August 20.  
Reveille  
8.45 a.m.

Wessels Farm, where we found three generations of ladies but no men, nor did we find any trace of the enemy. The women were of a better class of Boers, inclined to propitiate us.\* Breakfast was ready—would we partake? If we would not take their thoroughbred stallion, and a finely carved walking cane belonging to grandmother and given to her by Sir Donald Currie on a voyage once—and a few other treasures—we might help ourselves to anything the farm afforded. They could also tell us the best drifts over the Wilge River. Their Kaffirs rounded up a lot of horses, and we chose a couple of remounts at their request. We got a mouthful of coffee, beefsteak and bread and butter and galloped into the camp of the midday halt, in a bend of the river about sixteen miles north-east of Reitz. In an hour I was ordered to guide a new Cossack post under Corporal Roberts across the river to relieve Gray's men. Cholmeley and Rhodes were the other men with Roberts. The wind rose and a grass fire in camp destroyed thirteen waggons and badly burnt a man who could not get clear in time. It was a fine, clear day and in the far distance we saw one or two Boer scouts. I saw the first peach blossom to-day. The days and nights are getting warmer. The grass is showing indications near the roots of renewing itself, here and there; on the older burnt patches it resembles young crocus plants pushing above the earth. The silver wattle, one of the *mimosæ*, is blooming; where found, its perfume in the fresh air is simply heavenly. It is similar to the tree abundant in Mexico and Texas and called by the Indian name of "huisatchie."

Early in the afternoon our Column started again, circling west and north. Our Cossack post was called in later, and Roberts' and Rhodes' horses gave out. Cholmeley and I galloped to the head of the column and

\* A month or two later, pathetic extracts from the captured diary of young de Wessels who was killed were published in the newspapers. While fighting with his people he greatly deplored the foolishness of the war with England and the ignorance of his countrymen.

again did advance guard under Corporal Thornton, and afterwards I joined Roller's section to the right advance. At sunset we camped by long, deep lakes or lagoons of the Wilge River. The sight of this water after so much khaki veldt was most refreshing. These lagoons were in the form of a great horseshoe at the foot of a steep, black, burnt kopje. Newnham now sent Meikle, Jacoby, McDonnell, and me to the far crook of the horseshoe as a Cossack post. This turned out to be a fortunate duty, for we were able to cook our suppers on the strand of the riverbed, while fires in camp were forbidden on account of the long, dry grass and high wind. We were called in about nine o'clock in intense darkness, and found the men very miserable. All horses were saddled on account of the fear of fire; there would have been no escape if fire had occurred, for the column had mostly crossed the ford to within the horseshoe. My blankets being on my horse, I spent a chill, sleepless night after one of the longest day's work of the campaign. In the morning I found myself with a bad headache.

Yesterday was almost a record day for work and hardship. There was no meat issue, nor flour. The coffee this morning was mere wash, and cold; there was no sugar. Long before light Pyecroft and I laboured down to the bed of the river on dixie water fatigue. A Company fire was permitted this morning on the roadway, so that there was no excuse for the state of the coffee rations. The column started in broad daylight at 7.30, and just before starting two rations of flour were issued, with no opportunity to cook it! Thirty-fourth Company was made General Boyes' escort for the day. We rode in front with the General and guide. We rode up a long hill for about five miles, and then halted and watched as a sort of outpost the long column wind into camp below us; the direction come was about east. Around camp, for miles, recent fires had raged fiercely, owing to high winds. Camp was, still, on either a large branch or a bend of the Wilge River. I was ordered, after dark, to join a

August 21.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

company ration and forage fatigue under Quartermaster-Sergeant Grumley. After the fatigue was formed we had to march a mile over rough ways to the far end of camp, where we awaited the pleasure of some A.S.C. non-com. for over two hours, when Grumley would wait no longer. There was much complaint among the members of the fatigue, who returned at ten o'clock p.m. hungry and weary.

August 22.

Newnham and Roller took eight of us—two were men of Company 35th—out to reconnoitre up the river. In an hour we arrived at Twee Slabbert's Hoek Farm. Here Mr. Newnham left E. C. Scott and me in charge of two remounts we had picked up on the way, while the rest of the party crossed the river, with a Kaffir, to look at a bunch of horses grazing on the hillside. The women at the farmhouse were called Kemp, and they sold Scott and me bacon, bread and eggs, and cooked us some coffee, "mealie pap," and eggs. There was an interesting Kaffir kraal near the farmhouse. I sketched and made notes, and two or three young Kemp girls came up to question us. They were charmingly and densely ignorant as to the progress of the war. They were quite cheerful over the events, and were assured that everything was going in favour of the Boers, and they would, they said, eventually triumph throughout South Africa.

Mr. Newnham and his party returned in about an hour and a half, and we rode into camp to find Napier and Barrington had just returned from Harrismith with despatches. Edmondston and Faber were still absent. They left at Mill River on August 11th.

August 23.

Camp remained stationary. At sunrise a body of mounted men, including 34th and 35th, and the Glamorgans, all under command of Major Wyndham Quin, of the Glamorgans, fell in with one waggon for each Company, taking blankets and provisions. We started in a north-easterly direction, presumably towards the town of Vrede. After a brisk ride of twenty miles we





NATIVE-MADE CLAY BOWL ABOUT 18 INCHES IN DIAMETER, FILLED WITH "KAFFIR CORN," A SPECIES OF MILLET, WHICH HAD BEEN GERMINATED FOR A PROCESS OF FERMENTATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING "KAFFIR BEER."



KAFFIR "SSLOO," A RECEPTACLE FOR STORING MEALIES AND OTHER GRAIN. ABOUT 4 FT. 6 IN. HIGH. VERY PERFECTLY AND REGULARLY MADE OF GRASS ROPES LACED WITH FIBRE, SOMEWHAT RESEMBLING ENGLISH STRAW BEEHIVE WORK. BOTH THE ABOVE WERE SKETCHED AT A KAFFIR KRAAL ON TWEE SLABBERT'S HOEK FARM, WILGE RIVER, AUGUST 22, 1900.



halted at noon. At two o'clock we again halted, and twenty selected men under Newnham, from the three companies, rode with a guide named de Jager, from a point near his farm, some six or seven miles, into Vrede. Barton, Groome, Ingram, Paparritor, and I were advance guard to this little party, and as we got over the last rise, in view of the town down the slope, we saw some armed men near some trenches, on the outskirts of town; we galloped on, and they proved to be a prison gang, working gravel, with an armed guard over them. We rode at a gallop up the main street to the east of town. People gathered about the principal business portion, and some English sympathisers waved handkerchiefs at us as we passed. The five of us galloped to the far end of the town to the gaol, where we found two prisoners. One of them was much moved, he said quietly, "Oh, my God, how we have waited for you fellows!" This was J. Campbell, of the 46th Company 13th Battalion, Irish Imperial Yeomanry, who had been a prisoner since June 11th, taken near Lindley. The other man was R. Browne, South African Light Horse, prisoner twenty-six days, taken at Roberts's Drift. Campbell was very joyful over his release. He told me that he had no way to express his gratitude; would I accept his brass prison cup and a piece of bacon. (The cup is one of my most treasured mementoes of the campaign; it served me as a cooking utensil for many months.) The gaol was now very clean. An English settler, named Woodley, from Natal, was gaoler, but I did not see him, for his wife was very ill, and he was acting as nurse. Campbell told me that when he had been put in gaol two negro leprosy cases had been removed, and that English neutral settlers in the town had made a strong protest.

Vrede was at this time the nominal capital of the late O.V.S., but no government was found here. Mr. Newnham took possession of the public books and took a few prisoners, among whom was Kruger's despatch rider. He also called on the Landrost and took his promise to

report himself to our General. Mr. Newnham made a short speech at the Town Hall, and bade any who had arms to surrender them and to report themselves at our Headquarters, which would be established in Vrede in a day or two. One important matter we neglected, and that was to visit the Bank, which we subsequently learned had been supposed to be the public treasury. After a few purchases and some refreshment at Ross's Hotel, we rode back, in the dark, to de Jager's Farm, where Major Wyndham Quin had pitched his camp. I returned as one of the rear guard.

In Vrede I had acted as Mr. Newnham's orderly, and I rode with him to the Landrost's house to interview that official. In the garden I picked a sprig of peach blossom. Fruit trees, all about, were blossoming, and willow and wattle were proving the exquisite approach of spring.

At the hotel we learned that our prisoners, taken in the fight on Senekal kopje, had passed through Vrede on the way to Nooitgedacht. They had all remained for a few days in Vrede, and were remembered by name, especially McIlwraith and Richards, and Blyth who had remained in Vrede some weeks very ill of enteric.

Campbell told me, in explanation of his being alone at Vrede, that he had been sentenced to two months' hard labour for trying to escape, and because he would not name those who had assisted him in Vrede. The hard labour had not been enforced, but such was his sentence.

I saw the first "English" swallows to-day.

August 24.

Our little mounted force started from Camp at nine o'clock, back the road we had come, to the Wilge River Camp of General Boyes. We took our four prisoners, Vrede Public Books, de Jager, and one or two men besides. By noon a rough wind arose and made the afternoon journey most disagreeable. We rode over large tracts of recently burnt grass, and the burnt spikes after being scrunched by the front lines, blew in our faces as black dust, until we all became like chimney-sweeps or



negro minstrels, and so we arrived in camp. We had halted for midday lunch at a big farmhouse where there were several burghers. Robert Farrant, one of the Glamorgans, and my cousin, boiled some coffee with me, and we took lunch together. In one of the mealie store-rooms, I found about twenty home-made Martini cartridges. I thought they might indicate a larger store, but no search was made. We got into camp at 4 p.m., in a miserably dirty state—our journey had been sixty-five miles in the two days.

Vrede was the third town of the O. V. S. into which members of the 34th Company had been the first to ride.

There was a return of hard frost during the night, due perhaps to the falling of the wind.

Mr. Newnham's servant Keef came in with the Cape cart from Harrismith, bringing a mail for our men, to their great delight. My share was five letters. Faber and Edmondston returned to-day, they were decked out in new clothes, which they "drew" at Harrismith. The contrast makes us realise how truly dirty, ragged, and disreputable we are. We broke camp about noon, and the brigade marched towards Vrede, about eight miles, and camped by a tributary of the Wilge. In camp, we were all anxious to cook our flour into chupatties, and there was plenty of dung fuel though it was of a rather frost-bitten quality. Major Wyndham Quin made a fuss about the "smoky dung fires," and much to the men's discomfort, they were ordered to be extinguished. Men were supposed to remain in their lines and there was no other way for them to do their cooking.

Marching to this Camp, our Section had been right advance guard, and we had ridden very far out, but nothing of the enemy was to be seen in this neighbourhood. I was warned for night guard.

Mr. Newnham took us out before sunrise as advance guard. Our formation was different from the usual one. We were extended in double files, at about two hundred

August 25.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

August 26.  
Reveille  
3.45 a.m.  
Sunday.

yards' interval, on the right flank of and parallel with the road taken by the column or convoy. We made long halts on account of the drifts on the road. We could not see the convoy for most of our way, but we could hear the far-off creak of waggons and squeaking brakes, the crack of whip, and screaming Kaffir. My file partner was Campbell, the released Irish Yeoman, and I found him an interesting companion.

Aside from the great fires caused by warfare or its accidents, it is now the Boer farmers' "burning season," that is, the month in which he burns grass that has become so rank, matted and dead as to impede the growth of the young grass. To prevent the undue spread of fires so started, he ploughs long lines of "fire guards." Of course, this year has seen wider areas than usual burnt. To-day we passed large numbers of dead springbok, blesbok, and sheep that had been hemmed in and killed by the fierce veldt fires. Sometimes they were seen along a strong barbed wire fence, brought to bay by enemies they feared and could not comprehend. We also saw herds of several kinds of buck, and Mr. Newnham and others took a few shots for venison's sake but no hit was made. One herd was of more than a hundred. I found a Cape lark's nest with two eggs. The days were of fiercer heat than ever, and although we had two or three sharp frosts the nights generally were getting warmer. Soon after noon, we came to Leeuw Kop, a big kop which rises above Woodside, which is L. F. Drake's store. A Union Jack was flying breezily over the store. The kop loomed up sombre and dark above, for a recent fire had swept completely over it. There was good water here and the men enjoyed a rare wash and swim. About a mile from Woodside we came across a farm store of "oat hay," and our Section helped themselves to a bundle apiece—but a Staff officer made us go back with it to the farm. All the afternoon I was one of the grazing guards, and if I got no wash myself I enjoyed seeing the other fellows ducking about in the waterholes.

August 27.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.

My horse was lost from the lines during the night, and I had to stay behind to find him. The column started at daybreak. I found my pony and followed, along the long line of convoy to the front, and caught up my Company at de Jager's Farm, our camp of the night of August 23. After a noon halt, the 34th Company headed by Newnham cantered into Vrede and remained for two hours in front of the Court house. Then the brigade came in and we pitched camp a mile north of Vrede. There was a cold wind blowing all day and it looked like rain.

Incidents and experiences now crowded on us so, following so fast, that I found it impossible to take full notes.

August 28.

The night was very dark and threatening. There was an early morning thunderstorm, and for an hour or two I sought shelter in a tent. There was a rum issue after the storm. In the afternoon I went to the water below camp and washed my clothes and myself. After sundown Morris and I cooked chupatties together. At midnight it rained and thundered heavily again, and I turned in in a most uncomfortably crowded tent for the rest of the night.

August 29.

I was called at 5 a.m. to go on patrol with Rhodes, and Tomlinson under Corporal Roberts. It was raining a steady downpour. We rode out to de Jager's Farm on the Reitz Road, then we turned back south-east to Ross's Madeira Farm. It rained all the way and the wet soaked through our heavy military cloaks. We called at Madeira House, a well-built, well-furnished, stone residence. Mr. Ross received us most hospitably, and provided for us a splendid breakfast of eggs, bacon, steak, good bread, porridge and preserved fruits, and sweets, and it was all beautifully served by our hostess.

The rain still poured down pitilessly, and we sat and talked after breakfast of many things. Ross was originally a Natalian—but had been in Vrede for several years, owned the hotel and besides Madeira, other farms. Talking of cattle, he said, "I see you are Colonial." I told him no, I had had to do with cattle in Texas. He said that a very good friend of his had gone out there. I



said that most likely I should know him, and asked the name. He said, "Alex. J. Cloete." I told him I knew him very well, that I had seen him off at the station when he left Texas! Ross then told me that Cloete had died of enteric in Johannesburg two years before. He added, "When you return to Harrismith it will be most likely, by way of Newmarket. Newmarket was his store, and where he made the beginnings of his fortune." It is a small world after all. Cloete had often yarned to me of South Africa; we had played cricket and feasted together and here again our tracks crossed.

We gave Ross many thanks for such a meal and concluding our patrol, we struck camp more like drowned rats than Imperial Yeomen—but then we were buoyed by the memory of—a meal!

Ross allowed me to copy some of the passes granted to him.

Mr. T. H. Ross,  
Madeira, Vrede.

The above gentleman not having been on Commando, is hereby granted a provisional pass, and his goods are not to be commandeered.

By order, G. W. GORING,  
for Provost Marshal 17th Brigade  
August 27th 1900.

Pass Mr. T. H. Ross to his farm, Madeira Farm, through 17th Brigade Lines and back to Vrede, with Mrs. Ross and family,

H. W. STEWARD, Major,  
Provost Marshal,  
17th Inf. Brigade.

Pass available two days.

#### *Parole*

Mr. Thomas H. Ross, Madeira Farm, Vrede, having taken the oath of neutrality is allowed to remain on his farm and to proceed to Vrede, O. R. C. every Wednesday and Saturday to report himself between 10 a.m. and 12 a.m.

H. W. STEWARD, Major,  
Ass. Provost Marshal,  
17th Inf. Brigade.

28 8 00  
Vrede.

August 30.

It rained nearly all the night, and we rose damp and chilled. I had been night-guard, and to be up and walking about afforded as much comfort as cowering miserably in the mud could give.

At 2.30 p.m. we were ordered to move camp a mile the other side of a hill near town. It had stopped raining for an hour or two. The sky looked black and threatening—we saw it coming and what it meant. We worked like fiends, and had barely got a few tents up when a terrific wind and rain storm tore down on us with a perfect fury from the west, and it lasted for two hours. It cleared towards sunset, but rain fell again at midnight.

August 31.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

A Reconnaissance in force of four Companies was made in a north-westerly direction. I was one of the outer right flank guard, with Pyecroft, Patterson, and Kirby. Mr. Newnham directed us. Owing to the mist, at first, it was most difficult to keep in touch. About ten o'clock it cleared. We searched several farms, found three rifles and took three prisoners, and saw a few Boer scouts, but not the enemy in force. After a lunch at a large farm we returned to Vrede at 4.30 p.m. I bought, at the kraal of a Zulu, an assegai for 2s.

September 1.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

There was a frost last night, the first for a week. There was an early inspection of rifles and emergency rations. It was an easy day. I drew a pass and went with Morris to Ross's Hotel and got a good dinner. I saw at Vrede one of the most flagrant abuses of trust that I observed on the campaign. It was a case impossible of explanation. It was found possible to purchase various sorts of jam from a man in one of the lines at 1s. 6d. per pot. The pots were labelled, to the best of my recollection, "delicacies for the troops at the front"—their history I was unable to obtain. Some telegrams were read out to us of Buller's movements, &c. I assume that they had been heliographed from Column to Column or sent by rider from Standerton. I append, omitting names of persons and places, a copy of an

interesting Intelligence document relating to the policy pursued at this date:—

August 26th, 1900.

DEAR —,

— tells me you are acting Intelligence Officer with Northern Column.

I have no — map at all, only twelve have been received for whole division, and there are none available now.

I send you some proclamations which may be useful.

The following is a list of people who should be specially looked after:—

(Here follows a list of names.)

— and —, of —, have four rifles, but I think General — will deal with them.

Regarding passes issued by me or Colonel — these are to be respected unless you know any reason why they should be forfeited; but stock, &c., taken from people with passes should be taken by giving receipts. Other people who have not got passes and have not surrendered you know how to deal with. Any surrenders to General —, who administered the oath of neutrality against General —'s orders are not to be recognised.

Look out for hidden rifles, especially on widows' farms. Pay Kaffirs liberally for certain and true information regarding buried arms, &c., and hidden horses and cattle.

Field Cornets and Commandants' houses should be searched for documents.

If you find any farmers (except Englishmen) with passes ride or drive away from their farms please cancel that permission. Women should be strictly forbidden to move off their farms.

(Widows also include grass widows.)

At — search the house of — for papers, also all officials' houses, and try and get by bribing information as to the whereabouts of arms, loot, &c.

Don't trust too much to what Englishmen, —, say about Boers. All the farmers owe them money, and therefore it is not to their interest that the Boers should be deported.

An acknowledgment must be given of the amount of stock, &c., taken away from farms of prisoners of war.

All Kaffir kraals should be searched for arms and all natives forbidden to ride.

Yours sincerely,

Frost. Eighteen of us under Newnham, and about the same number of regular Mounted Infantry with a sergeant,

September 2.  
Bevella  
6.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

started at 7 a.m. with waggons on the same north-west road as we reconnoitred on August 31st (towards Frankfort). It was a foraging expedition. We rode to several farms. Mr. Newnham exercised much care in the disposition of pickets and in extended formations. We turned back at a farm some distance beyond the one we reached on August 31st. We commandeered four hundred head of cattle and a still greater number of sheep, and returned to camp by sundown, after a hard ride of nearly forty miles. We found that Roller had gone out with the rest of the Company to assist a convoy coming from Standerton which was believed to have got into touch with the Boers. It was a false alarm, and the convoy came in safely with our men.

## CHAPTER XXII

### A CATTLE DRIVE TO THE TRANSVAAL

**F**ROST. Stables were called by way of change. I was one of six grazing guards under Ouvry, and at 11.30 a.m. we were called in very suddenly. Roller had orders to take thirty men and drive four hundred head of cattle and eight hundred sheep to the Klip River Drift on the Standerton Road. There we were to meet drivers who would take over the stock. In the very outskirts of Vrede our Kaffirs began to give trouble, and Roller decided to send them back to Vrede at sundown. I think they feared to proceed, and I did not blame them, though it was exasperating. The sheep were awfully slow and gave us immense trouble at muddy drifts. We camped seven miles north of Vrede. I was one of the night guards at the road gate of the deserted farm at which we camped.

1900.  
September 3.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

It was a mild night. Some of the stock broke back towards Vrede. I was one of nine ordered to round up the missing cattle. We brought in thirty or forty head. Roller gave us an hour's grace for breakfast and passed on with the herd. At noon we all stopped for lunch at a deserted farm, five miles south of the Klip River. We passed on to De Lange's drift, which is a very steep, narrow and difficult passage. Here we found a Troop of the 13th Hussars awaiting us. It took us some hours and infinite labour and patience to induce the sheep to pass over the river. At last we found ourselves in camp in Transvaal territory.

September 4.  
Reveille 5 a.m.



This day's drive of cattle is one of the memorable experiences of those engaged in it. A most interesting account could have been written of the day's work, but there was no time for that sort of thing. It was a long, hot, wearisome trudge, neither an elevating nor entertaining occupation. We were learning that everything came within a soldier's duty, but there were some of us who expressed an opinion that this was hardly a duty we had anticipated, and that it might be appropriate for us to be called in future, "Imperial Yeomen Drovers." In spite of grouching every man toiled manfully at the job. Casting back over that scorching day's work, without notes, there are incidents that seem to stand out prominently against the great stretch of blue and khaki. Things unforgettable, that drew on pity, patience, and exasperation in equal proportions. The utter helplessness of weak, hungry sheep in crossing the muddy creeks and our work of pulling them up out of the slime and setting them on their feet. The weakness of their thin shanks after their struggles, and how like they seemed to toy Noah's Ark animals rickety on their pins. The herd was made up of all sorts of breeds and types of sheep and cattle. There were many long, white woolled Angoras. As to the cattle their ancestors had come from points as wide apart as the plains of India and Devonshire valleys, hump or colour, horn or udder bore witness. The sheep and goats had pathetic countenances, almost human—there were Angoras with grey beards, that looked like little senile patriarchs; there were sheep with wool about their faces that reminded one of sleepy faces peering out of "Balaklava helmets" at reveille. The goats had a trick of catching their teeth in the hair of their breasts, and they would trot along like a tightly curbed pony until we could catch them and release their teeth. They were very light and thin, hair and wool hid this pitiful aspect, but when we lifted a laggard in either hand by the wool of the back and carried them forward it became apparent that they were of little

use as human food. That was the fate in store for them at Standerton. Often they blindly rushed into barbed wire at the roadside, and it took us a long time to cut them free. The whole time we were whistling, shouting, and chanting to them as their multitudinous feet pattered along. There were many premature births, this seemed most pitiful of all. Cows calved, and mother and young were mercifully left behind. The cows stood startled, doubtfully regarding the vanishing herd from the middle of the road, now trying to teach the art of sucking as necessary to life, and now hesitating between two instincts, gregariousness and maternity. Thirsty cattle remembering past watering-places and not knowing what was ahead would make determined breaks back the road. Then we would have to mount our horses which we were leading and race to head them off. There was always before the herd the temptation to graze too long at the risk of lagging behind, which made our work constant. When we saw a sheep or goat could go no longer we let it drop out, and if we looked behind a quarter of an hour later we saw the furtive Kaffir steal from cover to claim his share of the spoils of war. We killed for rations, but the result was scarcely more than skin and bone.

At the drift we wedged them into the approach, but we could hardly get them to budge forward. When they moved they seemed to prefer the deeper, still water to the shallower, running parts of the stream. Ralli here headed a rescuing party and saved scores of foolish sheep at the expense of a thorough wetting.

The roll of those who crossed the Klip River on September 4th, 1900, is as follows:—

Lieut. Roller.	Fortescue.	Morgan, J.
Barrington.	Gray.	Meikle.
Cholmeley.	Heenan.	Morris.
Christy.	Herring.	Napier.
Corner.	Horncastle.	Oppe.
Day.	Lunn.	Pycroft.

Patterson.	Smart.	Tomlinson.
Paparritor.	Stewart.	Walker, G. A.
Ralli.	Scott, E. C.	Wilshin, T. J.
Rhodes.	Thornton.	Wilshin, E. V.

September  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Started to return to Vrede from the Trans-Klip Camp at 7 a.m. Halted for two hours at noon. We had a fine and a pleasant journey but for one incident. At a farm we got a hot reception from some women because we had to commandeer forage and food. One woman cursed and swore like a Yeoman, which is saying much. She threw a large stone at the troop, which narrowly missed Tomlinson's head. We got into Vrede to find Blount our sole representative, in charge of rations. These were scarce, but Roller, who was determined to make things as easy for us as possible, had sent Napier, Barrington, and Lunn on ahead, with instructions to buy up on his account everything, in the way of eatables, in sight, and in consequence we fared on chicken and bread and butter. The Brigade had departed southward, and we had instructions to follow without delay. Blount reported that there were anti-English demonstrations in Vrede last night. We slept in some houses in the Church Square.

We now learned that our Sergeant-Major Cowan and Private Hearne, who had been sent into Standerton to obtain clothes and other badly-needed supplies for our Company, had not returned, and that it was doubtful at what point they would rejoin us.

September 6.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

We started from Vrede at 7 a.m. to catch up Boyes' Brigade. I was made right flank guard at four hundred yards out. I passed through three or four farms on the mountain-side; the fruit trees and willows—"Volger Bloem"—were glorious with blossom and tassel and tender green buds. Eighteen miles from Vrede we halted for midday. At one farm a woman begged me not to shoot her husband if I met him on my way; he was gone to Vrede to report himself. I did not tell her that Vrede was already evacuated. In the

afternoon we marched on, and arrived at sunset at Newmarket store. I went out to the stable, and there I saw the keystone "A. J. C.," as Mr. Ross had told me, and I moralised over the strangeness of such re-encounters about the world.

I called Roller's attention to it and he said, "That is strange, for I knew Alex. Cloete in England, myself"; and Napier added, "And I have met his brother!"

The store was now kept by a Russian Jew called Simonski. He swore he had nothing, but when Roller said he would look around for sugar or aught else, he hastily produced his "last ten pounds, s'elp me!"

While we were at Newmarket, Mr. Drake, of Woodside, drove up and told us he was going to join the Brigade for protection. He gave me a loaf of bread, which was very acceptable to me. We were all very tired and weary, and we had much trouble in finding water our horses would drink. I believe the owner of the store was a rascal, for he misled us on several points. At last we tethered our horses and lay down in the road and slept. At midnight a Kaffir runner came in from Woodside with a letter for Drake from his wife, which said that fifty armed Boers had taken possession of the store and were going to ride upon Vrede. Roller called up Heenan and told him to ride with all speed with the news to the General and to ask for permission for us to go and meet the Boer force. The General's reply was short and to the point: "Join the Brigade at once."

We started at 6.45 a.m., and as Roller's horse had become sorefooted I was ordered with Paparritor to remain with him, as he went on foot. He would not take a horse from his men, though we offered ours. About a thousand yards from the store we heard shots, and Roller ordered me to return to inquire the cause. Meikle and another man who were to form the rear guard had allowed Drake to try the Lee-Enfield rifle. I rejoined Roller with that information. At ten Faber met us with a fresh horse for Roller, which Newnham

September 7.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

had very thoughtfully sent out from camp. Shortly after we arrived at the vacated night's camping-ground of the Brigade. Here we halted for a rest and feed. In the afternoon we followed the Brigade for twelve miles, and by evening we arrived at Mill River Bridge and occupied our camping-ground of August 11th—the day of dust and wind. We found it chilly and windy during the night.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### BETHLEHEM AND SENEKAL

**T**HE whole Brigade started at 5.30. Under Newnham the 34th Company were left flank guard, double files at two hundred yards' interval. We arrived at camp, near the camp of August 12th, about twenty miles west of Harrismith and not far from Langridge's Farm, at which Napier and his party had stopped on their Harrismith trip. It was a windy, cold, cloudy, disagreeable march. We were camped near a river, which I assumed to be a southern part of the Wilge. At almost every farm we passed the orchards and trees were all lavender, pink, white, and green with bloom and leaf. I was night guard, third relief. There was frost. It was almost full moon.

1900.  
September 8.  
Bevella 4 a.m.

I called 34th at 4 a.m. I was feeling ill to-day. We marched at sunrise, which was a very lovely, golden one. We marched thirteen miles in a south-westerly direction. General Rundle and his Division joined us at 10 a.m. from the direction of Harrismith. We pitched camp at 3 p.m. on a Bethlehem Road. Soon after 34th were ordered to saddle for special duty. Under Newnham we rode out five miles in a south-westerly direction and burnt a farmhouse from which some of our men had been fired at in the morning. It was our first experience in farm burning, and we did not go at it heartily, but we all thought it was a just sentence and one that had to be carried out. Not a soul was about the place, but a Kaffir woman turned up and said that the mistress and others had fled to another farm, so that the owners must have

September 9.  
Sunday.

anticipated punishment. We charged down on the farm swiftly and in open order, and very soon the building was in flames. Napier and his sub-section had viewed some Boer scouts and chased them for three or four miles, but they got away. We rode back to camp in the dusk, and arrived just as the full moon was rising.

tember 10.  
ville  
a.m.

We were well on the road before sunrise, going still towards Bethlehem. Thirty-fourth rode as advance guard of some Artillery. As we rode along in close order ahead, we saw a body lying face downwards some two hundred yards to the left of the road. It proved to be one of our Kaffir runners. He had been brutally sjamboked, and shot in several places, and had been dead some time.

A few of 34th accompanied the 35th Company to pilot a Convoy back to Harrismith.

tember 11.  
ville 6 a.m.

We were out on the road for Bethlehem by 7.45 a.m. A considerable force of mounted men rode briskly into the town. It is a little town among great hills, well planted with trees, not unlike, in style, Ficksburg. We waited some hours for the Convoy to come on, and then camped on the west side of the town. We found a few of the 62nd Company Middlesex in the hospital, recovering from enteric. They told us Boers were in the neighbourhood, and that three had gone out of town only two hours before we arrived. They knew we were coming.

tember 12.

I was called at 5.30 to be one of a cattle guard on the north-west of town. Corporal Barton in charge. The guard was divided in half—Palmer, Cholmeley, and I took the south side of the range; our post was just underneath a kopje, on the top of which was an Infantry picket. We heard firing out on the eastern road, and a shot or two at the north of our range. Palmer mounted and rode off impetuously to see what it was about. A moment after a bullet whizzed by Cholmeley, who was sitting in the sun making tea, over my head, and into the ground close by. This was the casual butcher at work, and the Infantry officer galloped down and gave him "fits," for he had seen

what was the matter from his kopje. The firing out on the road, however, continued, and it was not long before we viewed our Company and other mounted men streaming out on the road to the rescue. An hour or two after they returned with a Derby I.Y. patrol that had been held up and ordered to surrender by a lot of Boers, and one Lieutenant Bill Power had told them to be damned, or words to that effect, and he was shot in the cheek and neck for the compliment. They had held off the Boers until rescue was in sight. As Mr. Power came into camp he was cheered. This is how the story was told me. Palmer returned to us in very low spirits because he had missed a scrap. The grazing ground was strewn with an immense number of dead cattle, which caused a horrible stench. We saw large flocks of a small and graceful species of plover.

We were started late, but at 8 a.m. we found ourselves out on the Senekal Road. Thirty-fourth were a part of the advance guard. We marched very slowly, and arrived in camp very hungry. We had come but twelve miles. Our lines were at first located in a rough ploughed field, as if the veldt were not wide enough! Newnham, who was indignant at the want of consideration shown, complained, and obtained permission to remove to the green turf hard by. The men were delighted. The rich, green grass was now showing everywhere where the old fires had cleared the dead grass. Wherever trees are found they are in blossom, and almost all are laden with nests. One of the very interesting nests we often see is the weaver-bird's nest; they resemble woven bottle cases, and are seen pendant and swinging in the wind at the extreme end of the drooping willow branches.

September 13.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

Only the divisional troops with personal carts and waggons went out in the morning. The draught cattle and oxen of the supply convoys badly needed grazing, and one half of the 34th Company, of whom I was one, was told off for range guard. We started out at 3.30 p.m. Under Newnham we were rear guard, with a lot of

September 14.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

Manchester Infantry in front of us, but to the rear of the Convoy. Meikle, Fowler, and I were on the right flank rear. We saw mounted Boer scouts following us but they did not come within range, although we tried to entice them. At a farmhouse at which we called there were two women, one of whom had that morning given birth to a wee girl baby. We were eagerly asked in to view the mother and child, and as each took the child in his arms and praised it a wan smile flickered over the face of the mother. Her man, she said, was on commando. Meikle and I, during the afternoon, had had an opportunity of examining a lot of finch and other nests in a blossoming orchard. Almost every one of them had young ones. It was a long, weary march. At night-fall we closed in on the road with the Column. We were a long time in getting across the drift of Zand River, and did not reach camp, which was near Biddulphsberg, until 1.30 a.m. We had marched 18 miles.

September 15.  
Reveille  
2.30 a.m.

There was no sleep last night. When we arrived in camp Newnham said, "It appears that you have just 55 minutes—make the most of it." We paraded at the hour fixed, but, after all, the 34th did not start until nearly five o'clock, as our turn to ride out did not come until then. Our duty was the right flank guard. The Convoy was long, and the guard was again done differently to the usual course. We were formed into a series of progressive Cossack posts of three men each with a corporal, and we successively occupied positions to the right, each post relieving the post in front, at intervals, as the Column on the road advanced. We advanced towards Senekal, passing immediately beneath the Biddulphsberg. Davern, Morris, and I were together under Corporal Gray. We bought a breakfast at a farm on the battlefield of Biddulphsberg, and I remained sentry of the post while the others breakfasted. There were vast numbers of old rifle-bullets, shrapnel shot and shells strewing the whole neighbourhood of our post, and a shell had torn a great

hole through one of the farmhouse walls. While we were at this point a heavy cannonading broke out in the direction of Senekal.

The great bergs of Biddulphsberg, Tafelberg, and others looked grandly magnificent in the morning sunlight. They rise from the surrounding veldt on truncated conic bases, the upper strata are almost precipitous, and the summit is comparatively flat. They are covered, wherever herbage will grow, with rich grasses. They are great natural fortresses, and to anything like frontal attacks are practically impregnable, and one fortress covers the other in a long series.

Our post was in the rearmost position, so that although the cannonading continued and the Convoy halted, we knew nothing of what was going on. We assumed that the enemy were trying to hold Senekal against us. We saw one Boer gallop frantically out to our right beyond range, and in the far distance we could see the dust of a rapidly moving Convoy that could only belong to the enemy. Some of our posts in the front got under pretty brisk rifle fire, but no damage was done to our Company. Groome, Meikle, and Tomlinson told me their posts had come into close touch with the Boers in one of the spruits, and that they had exchanged rifle fire. Mr. Newnham was there actively directing their movements.

At two o'clock the cannonading on both sides almost ceased. A body of the enemy had apparently escaped northward or north-west. They had been making themselves free in the neighbourhood of Senekal for some time. We camped on the side of the kopje, and I was immediately told off for grazing guard with four others. The camp was a very large one, and thousands of cattle, mules, oxen, sheep, and horses were grazing in the patches of green grass. The tents were very numerous. Men were washing in the pools. Kaffir boys were herding. The town was over the end of the hill. Here and there were patches of dead horses and cattle. Waggon and carts were innumerable. After the noise



of the morning all was quiet and peaceful. We knee haltered our horses, but every minute or two we had to rise to keep our bunch within bounds.

We heard definitely some days ago that Colonel Mitford had returned to England. His departure threw us into closer contact with the leisurely and luxurious Battalion Staff, and they were to be continuously with us from now. Two of the Staff servants here temporarily joined the firing line.

One of the most serious obstacles to the rapid movement of columns in the field is the existence of that parasitical agglomeration familiarly known as "the waggon crowd," men of soft Staff and Company billets, officers' servants and grooms, non-combatants—a vast number in the aggregate. It is indispensable to have business executives attached to battalions and companies in the field. The original idea is a most proper one. How much it is abused in practice is only too well known to men of the firing line.

September 15.  
Sunday.

There was no reveille this morning, and the men were thankful for the rest. About 150 Boers with two guns are said to have trekked from Senekal yesterday. They replied to our fire accurately, but there were no casualties on our side. The Boers trekked very rapidly. It was unusual to have a quiet Sunday. Eight passes were allowed for town to-day. One did not fall to my luck. At sundown a vile, chill wind arose and made the night dusty and cold.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### BRONKHORSTFONTEIN TO ELANDSKOP

**M**UCH wind and dust. The 34th, being part of the advance guard, rode out very early. I was waggon packing fatigue man, and missed my Section in the dark. I immediately galloped after them, but at the front found that I had followed the Derbys and Leicesters. I could not find my Section. At midday, after scouting rapidly in a westerly direction, we rode into range of the enemy posted on high ridges to the front. They fired on us and the bullets knocked up the ground about us, but no one was hit. I now caught sight of Roller's Section to the left, and I joined him in a charge up the ridge to the left of the centre advance guard. Our men fairly raced up. The enemy left, and as we came to the top we rode almost upon four or five galloping away. Before we could dismount to fire they had galloped over into a depression or kloof; the ground was most uneven, hilly and rough. Rifle fire and cannonading now became general along an extended line. The Boers opened fire with a pom-pom, but the shells whistled high over our heads. We were ordered to halt under cover in an advanced position. We could see the enemy in considerable number in a great hill-surrounded plain beyond the ridges we had now occupied. Our Artillery and Infantry came up, and later General Rundle and his Staff followed. The Boer pom-pom at once turned its attention to the General, and the Staff for a short time was briskly shelled. The five-inch lyddite gun opened fire and

1900.  
September 17.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

shelled the enemy's Convoy which was trying to cross a deep drift about three miles away. We could see the enemy scattering about the veldt not knowing which way to turn, and it was said they were attacked from other directions by two other Columns. It was a great pity that the Yeomanry present were not ordered to charge down on the enemy's position—they were all most anxious to do so—but we were made to halt on the heights to watch the monotonous pounding of the enemy's waggons all the afternoon. Scores on scores of Boers got away. It was a mystery to one and all of us, and we have never understood the matter. There was the enemy, in a fix, but no action was taken except this bombardment. After a long interval some of the Yeomanry, the Derbys, were allowed to ride to a position to the left, from which the Boer pom-pom had fired in the morning—this was late in the afternoon, and the enemy had cleared. We could see several of the Boer waggons, abandoned, in the spruit drift to our direct front.

Towards sunset the 34th, under Newnham and Roller, were allowed to gallop down to the drift. We found smashed waggons and maimed and dead oxen, and twenty-eight abandoned carts and waggons with some oxen. This transport was laden with supplies and ammunition. There were strict orders against the men taking anything, but one or two got some sugar and jam, and a few skins by way of covering. Some Infantry came down and took over the waggons. Only one person had stuck to the waggons under that bombardment, and he was an old Jew who would not leave his goods which he said were on some of the waggons. We returned to camp after dark. We were fifteen miles a little south of west of Senekal. In the night one of our most adventurous subsections went out to explore for spoils of war, but they lost their way in the return journey, and stayed out, almost without cover, all the night.

September 18.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

Before daylight the mounted troops made a reconnaissance to the scene of the bombardment. We rode

down, 200 strong, in open order, in four or five lines of companies. We found four hard-looking Boers there with their arms who surrendered at once. They had hidden in a bend of the spruit last evening. I was one of the guards told off to ride with them to camp. We all returned to camp by eight o'clock a.m., when we found the whole division moving out. Thirty-fourth Company was made rear guard, and we had to wait until 1 p.m. to start, when the last waggons left. The name of the farm near the camp was Bronkhorstfontein. There was a fine dam at the farm and many of us had a good bath. A pit was dug for the captured ammunition, and it was said that over a hundred thousand rounds of all sorts were burnt. The noise of the burning cartridges lasted over half an hour in one continual rattle and bang. It was like an unceasing volley. Several broken waggons were also burned. We could see Wonderkop south-east by south of us, over 20 miles off, a pretty view. We rode in to the new camp very hungry, not having had proper rations for two days. We only went five or six miles south-west by west.

Thirty-fourth were assigned to be part of General Rundle's escort, and we started with him at 8 a.m., back towards Senekal. It is said that our march down to this point was part of a combined movement, but that the conjunction was not perfect, as we arrived a day too soon. It is also said that one of the other columns took a number of waggons, making the total capture up to 90. As we rode along with the General he directed that we should search positions to the left. We visited farms and hoeks, and climbed the hills, but found nothing. We made a long march and camped about four miles west of Senekal.

September 19  
Reveille 5 a.m.

We were told to expect battle to-day, but saw nothing of the enemy. We marched through the outskirts of Senekal on to Tafelberg. From 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. the West Kent (36th) Imperial Yeomanry, and 34th Company, were ordered to burn a number of farms, from

September 20.  
Reveille  
3.30 a.m.

which the enemy had shot at our patrols and troops. We were about a half company under Roller. Newnham went with others in another direction, with Firman and other officers. We burnt six farms. The first was the one from which a scout had been killed in May last, and from which Palmer and others had been shot at. There were an old man and his wife and two daughters in the farmhouse, and there was a good outhouse; the latter we did not burn. We took out all the furniture and placed it in the yard and garden. There was a big American reed organ in one of the rooms, which we brought out with much care. When the house was well alight the eldest daughter, a dark, stout girl, opened the organ and played and sang to the burning of the building; she was quite dramatic, one could but regard the scene with a mixture of feelings. She suddenly closed the instrument, and running up to me she screamed, "God will curse you! God will bless us! Why do you do this?" I opened my hand and showed her a number of discharged Mauser cartridges which I had found about their yard, and said these were the reasons. She denied they had been shot from here. I said I had picked them up here at her door, and I could not argue with her; I was but a private. Late in the evening we rode into camp, pitched ten miles east of Senekal, close by the north-west of Biddulphsberg. I was for night guard.

September 21.  
Reveille  
3.30 a.m.

Section II., 34th Company, were part of the right flank guard under Newnham. From a high position with his glasses he sighted some Boer scouts, and jumping on our horses we had a tremendous gallop after them, some six miles into the hilly country by Witkop. We missed the Boers in very difficult country; some of our Section could not keep the pace, and were stopped at a great spruit or donga, about sixty or seventy feet deep. About six of us rode to the top of a ridge where we had last seen the men. Then we turned in towards the Column again. Mr. Newnham then sent Davern and me in another direction to search for Palmer and Tomlinson, who were



scouting together, and the rest, under Mr. Newnham, went to look for J. Morgan and Faber. Davern and I rode a long distance over several immense kopjes, but we saw nothing of Palmer and Tomlinson.

In the heights of one great berg that we climbed we saw many strange flowers, plants, and shrubs that are not found in the lower regions, and we got a magnificent view of the surrounding country. We saw the minute, trailing Convoy, far away in the valley to our left front. Up here among the rugged stony ways and huge boulders, in the upper silences of the clear air, and ambling along in the warm blue sunshine, it seemed as if battle and murder *must* be farther off than it really was. I hummed to myself—

" Such life here, through such lengths of hours,  
Such miracles performed in play,  
Such primal naked forms of flowers,  
Such letting nature have her way,  
While heaven looks from its towers!"

a mountain hymn if ever there was one, though perhaps not written as such.

Davern and I rode into camp alone, long after dark, after a thirty-mile ride, and we were very tired and hungry. It was some time before we could find our lines.

We were having very hard work on very little to eat. We did not turn in at all this night. The first reveille was at 11.30 p.m., but the night was so dark and cloudy that the order was rescinded, and we were ordered to be on parade at 3 a.m. All the mounted men combined and cantered from camp to Bethlehem, starting in the dark. The sun rose as we got within four miles of Bethlehem. Mr. Newnham was then ordered to take the 34th around to the east of the town, across the deep cañon of the river, and to take up a position on the hills to the north of town. This we did, not meeting any of the enemy. Cossack posts were established under Corporals J. Morgan and Barton. The rest of the Company halted under the hilltop and began to look in their bags for something to

September 22.

eat. Suddenly several shots were fired in the direction of one of the Cossack posts, and bullets whistled overhead, and we scrambled to our mounts and galloped over the rise. Roller and Thornton were in the lead with Newnham, and Faber, Edmondston, Fowler, Morris, and I followed with others. What had happened was this: Barton, seeing a belated armed Boer trying to escape from town, rode down the hill to intercept him and told him to surrender. He seemed to Barton to do this, but as Barton began to dismount the Boer shot him through the thigh, and as he fell to the ground through the shoulder, and again, missing him. The Boer, thinking Barton was alone, began to "go through him," taking his glasses and bandolier. At this moment we galloped over the rise; some of us did not see what had happened, but Roller and Thornton took in the situation and made a dash after the now fleeing Boer. Both had good horses and gained on him, Edmondston and Faber followed at some distance, and put in a shot or two to keep him interested. At the end of a three-mile stern chase he was run to earth, and falling among some rocks he began to pump his Mauser at Thornton and Roller at close quarters. He was so nervous that he bungled, and Thornton, nothing daunted, closed with him in a hard struggle. It was an unequal match, for the Boer was a much bigger and heavier man; they tumbled over, clutching at each other's throats. Roller found that he had no ammunition for his pistol, so he gave the Boer a whack with the butt, when the man offered to surrender. They brought him back in triumph. It was a most plucky capture, for the Boer had had every advantage at the last, and fired at his pursuers at five yards' distance!

In the meanwhile Newnham had turned to the left down a mealie-field, Fowler and I following, and in the midst we found poor Barton lying in a bad plight. Fowler made a good job at first-aid dressing. Fortunately I had dressing, a pair of scissors, and a flask with my rum rations in it. I did what I could to help Fowler



CHARLES THORNTON.

To face page 306.





and Mr. Newnham, and the bleeding, which had been rather bad, was soon stanchd.

We took in two other men as prisoners. The man who had been pursued put a very bold face upon his capture, and said "it was a damned shame he hadn't killed one of them."\* General Rundle thanked Thornton and Roller for their pluck, and presented Thornton with the Mauser carbine he had taken. Barton went into hospital and was invalided home. We camped at the old ground west of town.

Stables called at reveille, and an order was read out, apropos of the incident of yesterday, to the effect that any man must continue to shoot until the enemy throws down his arms without orders. I had my pony shod. Fowler and I dined at the Cloete Boarding-house. General Campbell's Brigade passed through Bethlehem to a camp five miles on the Reitz Road.

September 28.  
Reveille  
5.45 a.m.  
Sunday.

I got Jas and Kion, Hollanders and Cape cart trimmers, to make me a small canvas bivouac shelter† for £1 2s. 6d.

At 8.30 twenty men of the 34th, under Newnham and Roller, combined with similar numbers from the Derbys, Leicesters, and West Kents, rode out seventeen miles north-west under Majors Firman and Cavendish. The latter was of the Intelligence Department. We tried to find a buried gun. At the farmhouse, where it was supposed to be, we found a big hole but no gun. The women said that spring-water was the object of the hole. We visited two kraals. The Kaffirs complained that the Boers had fought them, killing some of their number and their horses. Two farms in the neighbourhood were burnt, and we returned to Bethlehem after a very *hard, hot, thirsty, hungry* day.

September 29.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

\* This man Roux, in hospital, was recognised by one of the Guards as the man who had murdered, in cold blood, a wounded soldier in the field. He was tried and given twelve years. He did not deny the accusation I was told.

† For the rest of the campaign I used nothing else by way of night shelter, and in the heaviest rains I found it adequate cover. It could be rolled with my blankets and waterproof.



September 25

Most of the Division went out very early in the morning, but the Imperial Yeomanry were ordered to remain to await an incoming Harrismith Convoy. We heard cannonading, probably from Campbell's Brigade. About ten o'clock our prisoners (of May 25th); the men who had gone into Harrismith on September 10th with the 35th Company; Captain Brune, and McKechnie, who had left for Durban on August 18th; Cowan and Hearne, who had left at Vrede for Standerton, and others, all returned to the Brigade. Lord Denman also returned as Captain of the 35th Company. Mails came with the Convoy. My share was four letters. We marched in the direction of Lindley at 1.30 and got into camp at Blaauwkoop, about twenty miles from Lindley, late in the afternoon. I was for night guard.

September 26.  
Reveille  
3.15 a.m.

I woke the lines for reveille at 3.15, at the end of third relief. We were far out on the veldt by sunrise. Section II., 34, under Newnham, were left flank guard at four hundred yards' interval between the double files. Faber was my file partner. We came into touch with the enemy at midday, and exchanged cannon and rifle fire. Their force is said to be 2,000, under Hasbroeck. It was a miserable, trying, dusty day, and the continual draughty pressure was almost unendurable. We had little to eat, and came into camp very hungry at about three o'clock, at some point between Lindley and Reitz. We travelled in a northerly direction to-day for ten miles. I was glad to welcome back to the lines Blyth, Richards, the two Lees, Weedon, and Nigel Walker.

September 27.  
Reveille  
3.25 a.m.

We were out on the trail of the Boers before light. Thirty-fourth were a part of a strong right flank guard. We travelled northward and camped about twelve miles from the last camp. We saw many of the enemy and came under fire two or three times, once at quite close quarters. Newnham at one time took up a position near J. I. Leigh's farm, Trommel (Bethlehem district), and we fired at retreating Boers.





ROBERT GROOME,  
Lieutenant in the 35th Battalion of the "New Yeomanry."

The Division Camp remained stationary to-day by Elandskop.

The mounted men started out early towards the east, as far as I could make out, on reconnaissance. There was a dense, damp mist over the whole country. I was one of the right flank guard under Corporal Jack Morgan, with Faber, Barrington, and Edmondston. It was with the greatest difficulty that we kept in touch, and at times the delay of barbed wire fences caused some confusion. We proceeded in this fashion for about six miles, when the mist suddenly cleared, and almost as suddenly we found ourselves under a heavy fire from our left rear. The bullets came very thick and fast, but from what point we could not at first discover. We had to pass through an opening in a fence, and upon this point the fire seemed to be concentrated, as I came through I rode up to Groome's side and said, "Where the devil are these bullets coming from?" We were in open formation and no orders had reached us. Groome turned around, very quietly, and said, "I don't know, old chap, but I've got it in the hip." It was said in such an even voice that had I not known him I should have hardly understood that he was severely wounded. We took him to a kraal, where I tied up the wound in the best way I knew how. One of the West Kents gave me a dressing as the Companies turned to face the attack. The Boers were firing from a farmhouse, from which they were soon driven. There were no other serious casualties—there were one or two scratches. We left Groome lying on the floor of a Kaffir hut, surrounded by wondering Kaffirs, and in the charge of Ingram, who was a medical student. An ambulance was sent from camp to bring him in. After burning the farm we returned to Elandskop Camp, arriving at four p.m.

September 28.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

## CHAPTER XXV

### BACK TO REITZ

1900.  
September 29.

**O**THER columns were in the neighbourhood, and two Generals, who were said to be Generals Hunter and French, came to make arrangements for a different disposition of the columns. At 1.30 p.m. 34th went out with General Boyes' Brigade in a south-easterly direction. Our company diverged to near the scene of yesterday's skirmish and burned another farm and returned to camp, which was pitched nine miles from Elandskop. The Division has been split into Brigades again, and it is said that we are now moving upon Reitz "in echelon of brigades."

September 30.  
Reville  
3.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

Thirty-fourth started at 5 a.m. as left flanking patrol of the column. Newnham formed us into alternating Cossack posts. I was one of Napier's party. Captain Brune was with the General. We arrived at Reitz at noon, after a twelve mile trek south-east. We camped close to the town, west and south-west. We were told that Hasbroeck, with six hundred men, one gun, and twenty-six waggons, drove through Reitz on Saturday morning, very early, at a furious rate, probably on his way to Bethlehem.

October 1.

A small patrol, under Napier, went out on a foraging expedition at an early hour. We rode out north-west ten miles and obtained information of much forage at various farms. We breakfasted at a farm. The members of the party were Meikle, Jacoby, Lunn, Edmondston, Faber, and myself. We returned to Reitz at 10.30. Mr.



Newnham was very anxious at our long stay. The veldt here was still khaki colour; there had been few fires in the neighbourhood.

There was a most disagreeable and incessant wind all day. Napier took out waggons and a guard to get the forage. In the afternoon I was called with Caldwell, Christy, and Davern for a patrol under Corporal Gray. There was a small Gymkhana for those remaining in camp. Captain Brune paid us a pound apiece to-day.

October 2  
Reveille 6 a.m.

The Manchester Signal Officer asked for a guard. Jacoby, I, and one or two others, under Corporal Kirby, fell in for the duty. We rode six miles out, and the signallers tried to call up, by heliograph, Platberg station, above the town of Harrismith, over fifty miles distant. The day was too dull on account of smoke and dust haze.

October 3

A cold morning. One hundred mounted men of 34th, 36th, and Manchester Mounted Infantry, under Firman, went out on reconnaissance towards the north-west ten or twelve miles. Under Corporal Thornton I was, with four others, right flank scout going out and left flank on the return. We came into touch with a number of Boers, who fired at us from some hills in front. Mr. Newnham, with the assistance of Ingram, most gallantly captured an armed Boer, running him down at a gallop. Palmer and Roller ran down another in a similar manner.

October 4.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.

It is a simple wonder that they were not killed; they deserve the highest praise for their pluck. They were all fired at at close quarters. We returned at 3 p.m. It was fine and hot all day. The signal guard of to-day was sniped at the spot where we went yesterday. No one was hit.

About one hundred mounted men, with one gun of the 72nd Battery, and our own gun Section with the Maxim, under Firman, rode out eight miles north-east, and then bore about ten miles due west to Reitz. We encountered Boers in the morning about twelve miles out, and Thornton's post came under brisk fire. I saw from my post with

October 5.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Patterson about half a dozen Boers. Patterson rode in to report, but the gun was occupied with the enemy to the left. We arrived in camp at 9 p.m., after a fifteen hours' march.

October 6.

A very miserable, beastly day, very windy and dusty. I was held in readiness to be one of the Signal Service guards, but it was far too dusty to allow of heliographing to Harrismith. Some short patrols were done. A cold spell seems to have set in.

October 7.  
Sunday.

Under Sergeant Green ten of us started at 5 a.m. to make a surprise visit to Tafel's Farm, about four miles from Reitz. We surrounded it and took the irreconcilable old owner a prisoner to camp. He had threatened to shoot some of the A.S.C. men who were looking for forage. He had a Red Cross flag flying over his house because his nephew, who had been wounded at Elands-laagte, was lying there. It was said by the Intelligence that Boers harboured there nightly. I was grazing guard in the afternoon, and in the evening Morris and I got a pass to town and got tea and very good music at Paver's and Noble's houses.

October 8.

Cold wind all day. Several patrols went out. Under Lieut. Evans (promoted from the Gun Section), ten of 34th, with the same number of the O.R.C. Police, rode twelve miles out to a farm to commandeer some cattle. We saw ten Boers on the hills in front, and two came near my Cossack post. With two of the Police I advanced on a farm in the hollow, and two Boers rode over the next rise. Evans made me acting-Corporal of the right flank guard on the outward journey and of the left on the homeward. We had twelve hours of it, and quite thirty miles riding.\*

October 9.

I got permission from Newnham to go into town to get pockets made to my tunic and slacks. I had a fine bath, hair-cut, and general clean up. I visited Groome in hospital, I am thankful he is progressing favourably.

\* About a week after, near this place a party of the O.R.C. Police suffered about nine casualties, mostly killed.

A sudden alarm called out a patrol of the 34th, which very soon returned to camp.

There was some excitement in town last night, for a Boer came in under the white flag, purporting to bring a message from De Wet calling upon us to surrender, or failing the town would be bombarded at seven o'clock a.m. All the women and children were put into a camp by themselves in case of an attack.

October 10.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

All the available men of the 34th and 36th turned out on the Harrismith Road for reconnaissance. We came in touch and fire with a few Boers, not in considerable force. We rode six miles and returned. The movement was in very extended order and slow. We were in camp again by noon. On the return journey we drove over thirty buck right into the precincts of Reitz.

At four in the morning, E. C. Scott, F. J. B. Lee, and I, under Corporal Gray, went out five miles on the Harrismith Road for Cossack post. We took our rations of beef and coffee. The wind was terrific, and in cooking our lunch the fire was blown into the dried grass, and in a moment the blaze shot by me at running pace and with a most unpleasant roar. In a very short while the fire had swept a huge wedge-shaped slice of the veldt three miles long, and it was still progressing. Two or three Boers came from neighbouring farms, with Kaffirs, to beat out the edges nearest their land. We went down to meet them, but they advanced peaceably enough and showed us passes. This happened close by where the signal guard had been sniped. There seemed to be large numbers of Boers with passes on the many neighbouring farms. In the night there was thunder, but no rain.

October 11.

At this period Mick, the big white and black dog belonging to the 36th West Kents, took a keen fancy for riding with 34th Company. He had accompanied us to-day, and we saw much of him on our patrols and scouting expeditions. He had been with us since almost a puppy, he came to the Brigade in May. He had been under fire many times, and was always at the front.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### TO HARRISMITH

1900.  
October 12.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

UNDER command of the Colonel of the Manchester Infantry we started with two guns of the R.F.A. No. 2 Battery, and the Manchester Infantry, on the Harrismith Road south-east. Thirty-fourth was split into three parties, under Newnham, Roller, and Palmer respectively. Palmer now had a commission, having been promoted from private. I was one of ten with Sergeants Green and Napier, under Palmer, on the left flank guard duty, "Front form section, ten horses' length extend!"

By ten o'clock the wind blew a gale. At twelve Edmondston, E. V. Wilshin, and I were Cossack post to the midday camp. Our post was in the middle of a huge black patch, and we soon became like negro minstrels. The Boers sniped along the right at the right guard, but no damage was inflicted. Continuing the march we camped at sunset eighteen miles from Reitz, and thirty-five or so from Harrismith.

October 13.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

Thirty-fourth started as rear guard of the convoy. Edmondston, Faber, and I, under Corporal Gray, were right rear guards over two guns. At seven o'clock we met a large convoy coming from Harrismith on the way to Reitz, under the care of the 62nd Middlesex I.Y. We had passed them by eight o'clock. A few men of the 62nd flank guards had been cut off by some Boers, but had escaped and returned to Harrismith with some slight casualty. General Boyes had remained at Reitz, it seemed, to receive this Convoy. We halted at noon, and our subsection remained as

Cossack post above the camp. This point was just north-west of Platberg, distant about twenty-five miles. In the afternoon we continued a few miles to Langridge's Farm, amid a howling dust and thunderstorm. It rained and hailed a little, and I went supperless to bed. Our mail had been taken off the 62nd Convoy's waggon, and I was glad to get late in the evening two letters.

Thirty-fourth were left flank guard to the Convoy. The two guns of the R. F. A. returned to Reitz yesterday, and now we had a section of the 77th Battery, which returned to Harrismith with us. We trekked into Harrismith about 1 o'clock p.m. just as folk were coming out of church. We are promised a rest, and they tell us we have earned it. We camped west of Harrismith. We were glad to meet F. W. Scott, and J. C. McIlwraith, two more of our Senekal Kopje prisoners.

October 14.  
Reveille 4 a.m.  
Sunday.

Parade of horses in stables in the afternoon. I took Barrington's duty on a squad for the Remount Yard. We brought back forty or fifty for the 34th and 36th. They were divided in the evening between the two companies. The officers played polo near the Remount station. After sunset we were ordered to fall in, and very severe camp restrictions were read out to us.

October 15.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

Faber, Meikle, Blount, and I under Corporal Jack Morgan patrolled the Bethlehem Road for three or four miles out. We subsequently breakfasted in town before returning to camp. I drew a pass to town and bought a lot of new under-clothes, and other necessities. I lunched with Edmondston at the Central Hotel. Rumours were flying about that we were to go home soon!

October 16.

A short Patrol. Horrible weather with dust, rain, and thunder, and it stormed all the night. This camp threatened to be a second Maitland, with its Town Guards, Quarter Guards, and restrictions.

October 17.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.

Thirty of 34th under Roller and Palmer, went out west and north-west, twelve miles, to a farm where, it was said, Boers were putting up for the night. I rode one of the new Argentines, a perfect brute, who started the day

October 18.  
Reveille  
3.30 a.m.



by giving me a severe "cow kick." I went out without breakfast. Palmer tried him for a quarter of an hour, and confessed him an unmanageable brute. We returned at noon, having found no Boers. I was riding an Argentine only for the day, by order, my own pony was still very fit. My day's mount was sent back to the Remount station to be exchanged. We got additional mails, and my quota was three letters and a package of papers. One of the sergeants got into a sad trouble with one of the officers, after "lights out."

October 19.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Stables. Parade of new Argentine remounts before Newnham, at 7 a.m. There was a full turn out of the company outside camp at 9 a.m., as a Harrismith photographer desired to photograph us. In the afternoon I was stable guard. Mr. Newnham again promised me copies of snapshots he had taken. It was a fine, hot but windy day. There was cricket at the recreation ground.

October 20.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Bad weather all day. There were races to-day at the race-course. Roller won three. I remained in camp. I greatly preferred being on trek to this sort of standing camp.

October 21.  
Reveille 4 a.m.  
Sunday.

Under Newnham, twenty men went out five or six miles north of town on patrol. Ralli and I were made a Cossack post to hold a position on the right rear. We all returned to camp by nine o'clock.

I was delighted and interested to see Agnew and Weisberg, both of whom had been wounded at Senekal on May 25th, come into Camp in the afternoon looking very fit. I felt very unwell. The weather was detestable. There was an issue of rum.

October 22.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

I went to the doctor this morning. What with the Argentine's cow kick, and the inactivity of standing camp my liver was awfully upset. Groome went to Mooi River Hospital Camp—Green and Meikle saw him off at the train. His wound was now gradually healing.

Sergeant F. W. Scott and J. C. McIlwraith returned to the lines to-day. There was an inspection of rifles. Weather bad.

Still unwell. Little done. Disagreeable weather. There was a return match at cricket. The Imperial Yeomanry won this time.

October 23.  
Reveille  
5.30. a.m.

Forty-three men of the 34th rode out on reconnaissance to the north-east, as far as Pleasant Croft Farm. The owner of the farm was a prisoner in Ceylon. Two hundred men, altogether, of the Battalion under Firman went out, starting at 4 a.m. I lent Edmondston my pony as I was excused on account of illness. The force returned at 6.30 in a thunderstorm. Nothing was accomplished. They had a weary day, riding 45 miles. I was night guard, second relief.

October 24.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

It rained heavily for two hours in the morning. Very little done. There are unlikely rumours afloat of our early home-going.

October 25.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

The cannon of General Rundle were heard in the morning. I got a pass to town to get new clothes. Mr. Newnham gave me a special order to Nicoll. Nicoll, one of the Senekal Kopje prisoners, was now in charge of the Imperial Yeomanry stores. All the clothes had been picked over and only large sizes were left "5' 11" and 6' 2", so I got none. Blyth and I dined together at the Commercial Hotel. There was a cricket match between 34th and Derbys, the latter won. It rained in the afternoon.

October 26.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

All available men of the Battalion rode out twelve miles to Paul's Rock to try to surprise the enemy. They returned before noon without having seen any Boers. Edmondston again rode my pony, and when he returned he neglected to tie him to the lines, in consequence of which he was lost. There was an issue of rum.

October 27.  
Reveille  
12.30 a.m.

A mail came in. I cleaned my rifle and did some sewing. Church parade at 11.45, at which there was a fair turn out. It was a very wet night last night. There was a heavy thunderstorm, and nearly all the men got wet. In the afternoon, Edmondston and I rode around in search of my pony, but we did not find him. We took supper together at the Commercial Hotel.

October 28.  
Sunday.



October 29.  
Reveille  
11.30 p.m.

Again, the Battalion went out sometime after midnight for a surprise, but they returned at 10 a.m., having had no success. There was continual and heavy firing of cannon from daylight till eleven o'clock. Lieut. Evans, Napier, Barrington, Agnew, and Faber, went out west to reconnoitre. They watched a long column passing about 15 miles out, said to be General Rundle's division. I made a long search for my horse on foot, but did not find him.

October 30.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

Patrols went out at 5 a.m. With Fowler, I was Colonel Maine's mounted orderly. We were very busy carrying despatches all day from his headquarters to various points. I rode one of the Argentines. Generals Rundle, Boyes, and Campbell came in with their troops, which lent the town a very busy aspect. Harrismith is full of khaki.

October 31.

Paid in full to October. By permission, Lee, Edmondston, and I went out to look for my pony. We divided, and searched in various directions. At last I found him and one of the 35th horses, about four miles west of camp, grazing. My pony was well but looking very thin. Sergeant Bullock of 35th laid claim to the other horse. I was night guard.

November 1.

Rain and cold prevailed. We gave in to the stores all the kit we possibly could do without. It was announced that Roller and Newnham were leaving us. There was much disappointment. We were told that we were to start for Vrede on the morrow. We lined up and bid goodbye to Roller. We gave three cheers. Gray learned that he had a commission.

November 2.

It rained the whole day. A most miserable day. Very muddy and sloppy in camp. Nothing was done. I stayed, rolled in blankets in my little bivouac, for I was feeling very ill through lack of proper food. There was no possibility of cooking any of our rations. Everything one touched was wet and chill. We again lined up and said goodbye to Newnham to-day. A collection had been made in the lines, and a gold watch-chain was purchased and presented to him by way of souvenir. I felt the



ONE OF THE 34TH TENTS.

Basuto Boy.	Blyth.	Meikle.	Blount.	Jacoby.
	(Died.)		(Died.)	
	Lunn.	Green.	Weisberg.	
		Richards.		



ONE OF PRINSLOO'S TENTS?

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departure of Newnham and Roller very keenly ; they had always been much more to me than my officers, they had always been just, kind, and, true friends and leaders.

Stormy and chilly. I got a pass to town and wrote a lot of letters. Edmondston and I took supper at the Bakery, as the hotels were again mostly out of bounds for privates. The spruit was up, and some enterprising Tommies were stripped and carrying unmounted men across on their shoulders at threepence a head. November 3.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### "THE STANDEBTON TREK"

900.  
November 4.  
Zeville  
8.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

IT was a lovely morning. We broke camp and remained saddled until 7.30 a.m. Many precious possessions had to be cast aside because we were ordered to travel "light." We marched through Harrismith to the north road and halted at 10.30 for four hours. The whole Battalion marched together, under Firman. Thirty-fourth were now commanded by Captain Brune; Palmer and Gray were the Lieutenants. In the afternoon 34th were left flank guard to a gun. We camped seven miles north of Harrismith. We were with General Boyes' Brigade.

November 5.  
Zeville 4 a.m.

It was so much pleasanter to be on the trek. A standing camp is a misery and exceedingly unhealthy as a rule. Section II. were under Gray. We were again the left flank guard. We travelled northward, and at 3.30 we arrived at Mill River Bridge. It seemed to be always windy here. To-day was no exception to the rule, but it was not too unpleasant and the afternoon was fine. We were on the way to Vrede. Four guns of the R. F. A. and the Manchester Infantry accompanied us.

November 6.  
Zeville 3 a.m.

We started at 4.30. Thirty-fourth were left flank guard with an interval between Sections I. and II., Section I. being in advance. With Meikle and Blyth, I was one of the connecting files between guard and Convoy. The Sections extended almost three miles to the left. In scouting towards a kraal, under Brune and Palmer, some of the men got into touch with a body of the enemy under cover. A heavy fire was turned on our men, and Rhodes was

shot in the abdomen. Paparritor's and one or two other horses were wounded. We were now quite near Cornelis River, where camp was to be pitched. Blyth and I halted for over two hours on the Convoy coming to a stop. We saw the ambulance going out, not knowing who was hit. Blyth, who did not seem well at all, lay down and slept heavily in the sun. I picked a hatful of mushrooms which the recent rains had brought out. The veldt was green and pretty with wild flowers. The cause of the halt was the crossing of Swartz Klip Drift of the Cornelis River, about twelve miles from Mill River. Presently the ambulance came slowly back; the Convoy was moving into camp, and Blyth and I closed in. As the ambulance passed us an orderly said, "He has just died." It was poor young Rhodes. He was buried on a rise on the north side of the river at 5.30 p.m. General Boyes and Staff and most of the Battalion attended. The service was very impressive. The body was neatly sewed in a blanket and covered with a flag.

We started at 4.30 a.m. and we continued our left flank guard. We were more or less in action the whole day. We found the enemy on almost every ridge, and constantly came under fire. The 35th, under Denman, were on the right, and in taking the kopjes to the east of Newmarket Store they had three men wounded. For a while we had a hot time on a low kopje or ridge, where there were the remains of an old Kaffir kraal. The Boers deliberately exhibited a white flag and reserved fire. On Corporal Thornton rising to examine it with his glasses he was fired at, and one bullet, entering at his wrist, shot along his arm and came out at his elbow. The Colonel of the Manchesters, on observing our situation, rode up and then called two of his Companies to our assistance. Eventually two hundred Boers were turned out of their cover. We camped a few miles north of Newmarket Stores.

November 7.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

The enemy were in front and at our right. About six o'clock all the mounted men advanced in an extended

November 8.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

body on the right, making a wide detour to the left. We encountered Boers at every ridge. There was a great deal of firing all the morning. Our Maxim got a chance at a body of the enemy, and it was apparent to us that they had casualties. After a good deal of skirmishing and ridge rushing we rejoined the Convoy in a broad green plain issuing from the kopje ranges in which we had been fighting. We then learnt that Lieutenant Woodhouse, of the Manchester Infantry, had been dangerously wounded in the advance. The Brigade made eight miles, and we camped on the north side of the plain. There was rain and thunder all night.

November 9.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

We were left flank rear guard, and were fighting all day. We found the Boers at every turn. We were under *heavy* fire three times. I was riding in Agnew's subsection, and next to John Edwards, our late cook, who went by no other name than "Willie," and who had just joined the firing-line for the excitement it afforded. T. Lee had taken his place for a while as Company cook. Edwards wore his blue cloak, for it was a cold morning; he was also riding a white horse; he was therefore a fair target for a marksman. As we were riding about five hundred yards south of a low kopje, a dozen or so men were riding to the top. I shouted that they were Boers, and not a part of our guard. Edwards shouted, "Go on with yer, Corner, them ain't no Boers!" We were standing out in the open. A sudden shower of whizzing bullets among us decided the question, and we turned to gallop for cover. Another volley, and this time Edwards shouted, "Don't leave me; I'm shot in the head!" Jacoby and I rode at either side of him, telling him to keep up until cover was reached, which he pluckily did. Another volley skimmed harmlessly by, just as we got to a depression in the ground. Edwards was curiously wounded—the bullet had gone through his hat, struck the top of his head, and slipped along, inflicting a tearing scalp wound, without injuring the skull. Jacoby whipped out some handkerchiefs and

ried up his head, which stopped the bleeding. He was ordered to join the Convoy, although he expressed a wish to stay and see the day out. On the next ridges we again ran into a lot of Boers at a farm; they fired at us at close quarters, but were so anxious to get away that they missed. There were one or two very narrow escapes. Napier and Edmondston had an especially narrow squeak. We fired many volleys at them as they galloped off, but could not say what casualties we caused. We camped in the outskirts of Vrede at two o'clock p.m. This journey to Vrede cost the Brigade two killed and seven wounded, of which 34th stood their share.

The Manchester officer died of his wounds, and was buried in the forenoon.

November 10.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

I was given a pass into Vrede and I lunched at Mrs. Reid's.

At 2 p.m. we started for Standerton, in the most awfully lowering thunder weather. The sky was inky, and at various points storm centres of whirling black clouds could be seen. We fought the Boers all the afternoon, and we passed through heavy thunderstorms and rain. The lightning was vivid. At one moment we became engaged with some Boers from the top of a small iron-stone kopje. The rain was coming down in sheets. The fifteen-pounder and Maxim were keeping up an incessant boom and chatter to the roar of thunder. Our Company were lying down among the nodules of iron-stone which covered the top of the kopje, firing as fast as they could at the enemy on the opposite ridge. Then a blinding flash seemed to envelope us all, and it was accompanied by a deafening explosion. I think every man turned to see who remained alive. They all declared they had received a bump in the back. For myself, I was conscious of a slight spark which leapt from my wet thumb knuckle to a cartridge in my bandolier. Also that the lightning seemed to simulate the sound of a huge clanking chain being thrown to the ground, quite apart from the noise of the explosion of thunder. This flash seemed to clear



the air, and the Boers also, for a while, although the lightning played around for some hours after. One of the Royal Scots was shot and killed on the right. We camped in the sodden grass at sundown, about seven miles north of Vrede.

November 11.  
Reveille 5 a.m.  
Sunday.

All the mounted men started to take the ridges to the left and the kopjes to the right of the road, and subsequently 34th fell in as the rear left flank guard. Thirty-fourth came under fire very early, and had to skirmish with the Boers all the morning, until coming into the comparatively flat veldt land bordering the basin of the Klip River. We caught some stray horses for remounts, over which Palmer, sensibly, was very keen. We crossed into Transvaal territory at 2.30 p.m., and camped on the bank of the Klip River. One stretcher-bearer was badly wounded to-day.

November 12.  
Reveille  
3.30 a.m.

The Brigade started at 5 a.m. from the Klip River Camp. The 34th were again left rear flank guard. Palmer and five men were fired upon, rather heavily, out on the left. Shortly after we met the scouts of Thorneycroft's Horse out from Standerton. We arrived at Standerton with the Convoy, after making a long mid-day halt, late in the afternoon.

November 13.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Some of the men drew passes to town. Mine was not a fortunate draw. I went, however, with Sergeant-Major Cowan and Grumley to the Army Stores at Standerton and obtained some new clothes. Standerton is a dull frontier town, not a nice place at all, and full of all sorts of doubtful-looking characters. There is a large Army base established here, which contributes to make the town look busy. I washed in the Vaal River, and gave a lot of old underclothes to Mr. T. Atkins. I was night guard, third relief.

November 14.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

I cleaned stables in the morning, and in the afternoon I was stable guard, and although it was my turn to get a pass I could not go. We heard that we might start on the morrow on our return journey.

November 15.  
Reveille  
3.30 a.m.

We started early with a long Convoy train. Thirty-

fourth got some sniping from the right but no casualties. At midday we halted at the camp of General Clery's Division, and saw some of the Devon Regiment. In the afternoon we went on, crossed the Klip, and camped on the south side.

We started from Klip River Camp in pouring rain, and we spent a very long day in guarding the heavy Convoy. We had a great deal of work and continuous skirmishing and fire on both flanks. Some of Thorneycroft's and some Devon men and a pom-pom assisted us on our way, and after doing some excellent work they returned to their camp about noon. Two Manchesters were killed and three wounded.

November 18.  
Reveille  
3.15 a.m.

The weather became darker and darker towards night-fall. At the last stage near Vrede, a rear Cossack post of a dozen men was formed, under Sergeant Green, of which I was one. After dark, as we came into the town, the skies seemed literally to break upon us and upon the tail of the Convoy. The darkness was so intense that it was impossible to distinguish the outline, even against the sky, of any person, animal, or waggon. The rain was more like a cataract than any rain I had ever seen, and I had frequently experienced tropical rains. The roar of the storm drowned even the shouts that went up from lost soldiers and drivers. This lasted at its worst for half an hour, and by that time every mounted man and Infantry man had lost touch. The drivers had halted and hung on to their waggons. My own comrades had lost each other before they realised what the storm was to be. I was drenched to the skin, and was chilled to a shivering ague fit. I could find no one who knew where the I.Y. lines were. I went to the Reids' house and dried my things and got a cup of hot tea—by that it was midnight. I put my horse in a shed with plenty of feed, and, feeling indescribably drowsy, I slept on the floor until four o'clock, when I rose to find that Mrs. Reid and a neighbour, Mrs. Fife, had some breakfast for me.

November 17.

Last night was the most fearful night in my experience. I rode into our lines about 6 a.m. this morning, to find that all my comrades had been in similar plight to myself. Those who came into camp earlier were much more fortunate, but even they had been swamped. There was a general indulgence in the camp, and men were allowed to wring themselves out. Langley brought me a stiff cup of coffee and rum, which was "grateful and comforting," as the advertisement says. The weather cleared. I was morning grazing guard. At noon the horses were called in, and a force of Yeomanry and Infantry and a gun or two went out to draw fire from a berg about five miles south of Vrede. After making the enemy discover himself, a bombardment of the berg was made. We burnt a farm under their fire and got a lot of fowls. There were no casualties, and we returned by sunset to camp at Vrede. I rode in Agnew's subsection.

November 18.  
Reveille 3 a.m.  
Sunday.

We started from Vrede Camp at 4 a.m. Thirty-fourth Company were right flank mid and rear guard of the Convoy of empty waggons. From the outskirts of Vrede we were under constant Mauser fire. We saw many small bands of Boers hovering on our flanks, and when they had a chance they dismounted and fired at us. A lot lined the ridges above de Jager's Farm, and J. Morgan got a narrow shave. Shortly after, as we passed the farm, the Boers fired from a hill at us. A big bullet plopped into the ground at the heels of Gray's horse, and I heard several others whistle by. Thank God there were no casualties to-day, although there was such constant rifle fire. We rode fourteen miles, and camped in lovely weather shortly after midday.

During the afternoon the West Kents and others made a five-mile reconnaissance to Drake's Woodside Store. The Boers in force held a kopje above the store, so that our small force failed in the attempt to take or destroy the place. Some of the West Kent horses were killed, but no man was wounded.

**November 19  
Reveille  
8.15 a.m.**

Seventeen of us, under Gray, were left advance guard. We rode very far in the advance, quite out of touch with those in rear, and we paid for the boldness by a rather bad half an hour. We rode on in extended order for four hours, without seeing much of the enemy. Gray had thrown out two advance scouts, of which Meikle was one. To the fact that he was very vigilant we owed that we were not cut to pieces. We were riding towards a position very suggestive of ambush, an open approach to the first ridge of a conjunction of ridge ends, when it occurred to Meikle to dismount and peer above his skyline before riding over it. I was closely watching him, as I dare say others were, for the nature of the ground was so very suspicious. As Meikle cautiously crept to the edge we saw him duck his head very suddenly, and he excitedly signalled us to keep below the skyline. We cantered up to the little rocky ledge behind which Meikle was, and he hastily told Gray that there was a party of Boers awaiting us just over the skyline. Gray very pluckily, but rather rashly, went up to examine the situation. It was a sign to the Boers that they had been seen, and they fired at him. He at once ordered the men to the edge of the cover, and in a few moments a terrible fusillade was opened on us from the front and right flank. With T. A. Scott, Barrington, and Hunt, I was holding the Section's horses, and we saw that we were not under cover with them, nor was it possible for us to get under cover from the attack from the flank. Gray's party opened a splendid reply, but the Boer bullets hummed like bees about us. Horses and men were all within a few feet of each other, all within a little compass of the only cover near. The bullets smacked and cracked the stones about us. To rise to aim meant to chance half a dozen shots being fired at your head. Jack Morgan, so taking aim, received a Mauser bullet through his cheek, touching his eye, the same missile passing through his shoulder. Morris rose and pulled him into better cover. Gray then got a smash through the elbow



and another through his tunic, scratching his body. One of Hunt's horses was shot through in two places. Agnew and Izard galloped in from the left where they had been scouting a ridge. Agnew, cool, and not knowing quite what was happening, remained in the saddle. I shouted, "Get down, Agnew; get down, or they'll get you!" Bullets had simply buzzed about him. I could hear Napier raging because Morgan was hit, Green expressed himself as being anxious about the right flank, and Richards was laughing and joking because he was taken in the rear as well as front. Hunt said, "Now my horse is hit twice!" The men were holding themselves well, each in his way. T. A. Scott smiled his slow, quiet smile, and said, "Pretty warm, Corner!" Barrington made some reference to partridge shooting. As for myself, I did not like it at all. One lives at a tremendous pace at such a moment. I seemed to take in every sight and sound with senses tense and clear, yet I knew myself to be counting the moments and saying, "Not that time," "No—nor yet!" Mechanically I put out my hand to pick up a big stone to begin a sangar cover for my head. A bullet shattered the stone in front and a splinter cut my finger slightly, and I felt annoyed. I coaxed my four horses closer to the ledge, and next I noted that the Boer bullets slackened, and that our Infantry hurrying forward, were coming up in the distance—ever so slowly. Meikle helped down Morgan, and I did my best to tie up his wounds and make him comfortable. His eye was closed and his face smothered in blood. I was very sorry for him; I thought the sight of his eye was destroyed, and he was such a nice boy—a youngster almost. His nickname was "Cherub." Now the fire on both sides thinned down to an occasional snipe. Both Gray and Jack Morgan made light of their hurts, and Morgan's attempts to laugh almost made me do the opposite. I said, "Stop it, will you!" Just as the firing was done Napier came down, his eyes blazing, and all he said, was, "Dear old Jack!" Barrington rode off in the tailing of the firing



to fetch the doctor, but the first man who rode up was the young Padre, a fine fellow we liked very much. He hesitatingly said he thought we might have wanted him. "No," we laughed, "only the doctor so far!" By and by an ambulance came along and took Jack Morgan to the field hospital.

As soon as the Infantry had come up, and the two wounded men had gone in, the rest of us under Napier and Green pushed on and occupied a great kopje ridge in front, and the 35th came up and occupied a ridge to our right front. One of their men got a bullet through his helmet in the advance. On riding down the hill in a further advance, Morris' horse fell, and his arm became very badly injured.\*

We camped at noon about three miles north of Newmarket Stores. The enemy was known to be in force at the front, and strong pickets were thrown out. I was for night guard.

Bombardment of the ridges to the front and to the right and left began early in the morning. We passed Newmarket Stores in constant engagement with the enemy. The 34th was gun guard; we saw some very fine marksmanship, and that the Boers suffered casualties. We arrived at an early hour at Cornelis River and camped on the north bank.

November 20.  
Reveille  
8.15 a.m.

At two o'clock we fell in with stripped saddles for a reconnaissance to the west. The wind was blowing almost a gale. Sergeant F. W. Scott was in charge of the centre advance scouts, which were Blyth, Blount, Hearne, and myself. Green was on the left with four, and Napier on the right with four more. Palmer was in command of the rest of the 34th. Lord Denman was just behind him with 35th, and other Companies, some Infantry and two guns completed the force. Scott galloped straight for a high ridge to the front and sent me to deliver the direction to Green on the left. Just as

\* The doctor did not discover until three or four days after at Harrismith that Morris's arm was fractured. He was invalided home.

I returned to Scott's side on the edge of the ridge we had been ascending, he half turned sharply and shouted in the roar of the wind, "Ride back and tell the support that there are thirty or forty armed Boers in front." His other scouts closed and dismounted, and firing began at once. Scott was shot through the arm. Palmer galloped furiously forward, and I went down towards the 34th and 35th to tell them what was afoot. Just as I came to them Lord Denman was shot through the leg. He scarcely showed that he was hit, and took it coolly. The shot that struck him was fired over our men as I was riding down. After delivering the message I again galloped up to where Scott and Palmer were directing the fire of the 34th. Scott was as cheerful as if he had not been hit. Blyth was by him firing as steadily as if it had been target practice. Cholmeley was swearing over a jammed rifle, and the others were keeping the enemy interested. Palmer was enthusiastic because the Boers were getting away under difficulties. On the right Napier's party had come within a hundred yards of a body of Boers in khaki, and had Napier not doubted their identity he could have smashed them. They retreated over a ridge, mounted and galloped off under a little volley that came too late to be effective. All this occupied only a few moments, and Palmer, seeing that all the Boers were making off, ordered the 34th to mount and charge, and we rode out in the open and galloped at a racing pace after them. The country became so exceedingly rough that after a charge of three miles or more, at a tremendous pace, they gained on us and got on to a big kopje to our right front. Napier now took a party of us to a farm in the front, from which the Boers had been firing for a while, and we determined to burn the house. There was very little time to spare, for we were far to the front. The roof was high, and there was nothing that would readily burn. As I was a lightweight I was hoisted to the roof to set fire to the thatch, and the place was soon ablaze. There were innumerable signs about it that it was a nightly barracks

for the enemy. There was a great store of mealies on the floors, and there were one or two Cape carts. There was no one in possession. Two of the Wilts Imperial Yeomanry had been wounded on the right, and as we fell back the guns came up and shelled the high ridges beyond the burning house, and many Boers who had not expected Artillery so far out were surprised and dismayed, and got away at a mad rate, but not before the fire had done some execution among them. We arrived in camp again after dark. On going into the lines we rode by the grave of our comrade Rhodes.

The 34th were rear guard, and we waited until the last man had crossed the drift of Cornelis River. The Boer scouts could be seen awaiting our departure. Section II., Gray and Scott being disabled, were under Sergeants Napier and Burrows, on the left. We exchanged a few volleys with the enemy on their following us, but they did not trouble us very much. We got to Mill River at 2 p.m. and camped at the same old place under the isolated kop. We had been in full view of the Harrismith Platberg all the morning, and the sight gladdened us, for we had had a hard trek and we needed rest. Only three cannon shots were fired on to-day's march.\*

November 21.  
Reveille  
3.15 a.m.

\* The following is an extract from the Brigade orders of November 21st :

MILL RIVER,

21st November, 1900.

No. 2. Being now a day's march of Headquarters, Major-General Boyes desires to convey to the forces under his command his thanks for the good service they have rendered since November 4th. The guarding of a Convoy gives no opportunity for undertaking offensive operations, and the duties of constant Advance, Flank and Rear Guards exact from the troops composing them continued labour and watchfulness.

The Imperial Yeomanry have been, as ever, conspicuous for their gallantry and intelligence, and the R.F.A. and Infantry have done their onerous duties so thoroughly as to give a troublesome enemy no chance of any success.

Of the services of Lieut.-Colonel Firman, commanding Imperial Yeomanry, and of Lieut.-Colonel Beay, who has daily commanded the Convoy guard, and of Major Percival, R.F.A., the Major-General here records his high appreciation.

By order,

(Signed) C. B. FITZHENRY, Capt.

Brigade Major.

vember 22,  
veille  
5 a.m.

We started very early towards Harrismith, and the 34th were right flank guard. At ten o'clock a halt was called, and all the mounted men paraded for a reconnaissance in force. A gun and a company of Manchester infantry accompanied us. We went out in an easterly direction, several miles, and searched ridges, farms and great valleys for the enemy. I was one of the advanced scouts, directed by Napier; Blount was my partner. We only saw bodies of Boers at a great distance, out of range and evidently watching us. We returned towards the camp and found the Column on the move. We finally camped, after being for over twelve hours in the saddle, by one of the big foot bergs that are the disjointed natural outworks of Platberg running to about seven miles north of Harrismith. A violent dust and wind storm arose just as we struck camp. I did not attempt to put up my bivouac, but sandwiched myself between a waterproof and some blankets until a lull came.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### HARRISMITH AGAIN

**WE** started from the northernmost berg of the Platberg range at 5.30, and marched the seven miles to Harrismith in a thunderstorm. The storm continued all day and until far into the night, the sky being all the time very overcast and lowering, and the lightning constant and vivid.

1900.  
November 22.  
Bevella  
4.30. a.m.

An incident occurred here which got me into serious trouble, but which gained for me the hearty thanks of my comrades in the firing line.

At this time there were only twelve men in the 34th company, privates in the firing line, who were available for the Company fatigues and guards. The rest of the members remaining were either non-coms. or men excused as "batmen" or for some reason or another. There were six men acting as officers' servants. Yet at each camp a private was told off to dig the officers' private latrine, to shoulder a dirty closet-box from the waggon and erect it with a canvas screen. Secretly the men had thought this an injustice, but acting upon experience we had done the work constantly without complaint. Corporal Agnew, who was orderly corporal of the day, came to me soon after our arrival at the Harrismith camping-ground and warned me for "officers' latrines." It was raining heavily, and I went to Agnew's bivouac and said, "Corporal, may I wait until the shower is over?" He replied, "Certainly; come in." I crouched down in the entrance of his bivouac and waited about five minutes.



The Sergeant-Major presently shouted from his waggon, "Corner, I thought you were warned for officers' latrines!" I replied, "Yes, Major! I am just waiting here till the shower is past." He then came over and said roughly, "Oh, the officers can't wait for you or the rain." That decided me to test the matter, and I said quietly, "I expect they can." He was an old soldier and knew just what that meant, and said, "Do I understand that you refuse to obey this order?" I replied, "Since you put it that way, yes!" I was put under arrest and taken to Captain —, who asked me if I refused to dig the officers' latrines, and I replied "Yes." He replied angrily, "By God! sir, I'll get you two years for that!" I said, "Very well, sir." I was marched away under arrest. Lieut. — came down to me looking very sorry, for he knew it was a serious matter. "You bally old fool, Corner!" he said, putting his hand on my shoulder, "You should not have done it that way." I said, "There is no other way to stop this sort of thing going on in the lines!" As for the rest of my comrades, almost without exception, they thanked me. It was a point about which most of them felt strongly.

In the night there was heavy rain and hail, and most of the bivouacs were beaten down.

November 24.  
veille 7 a.m.

I was taken before Colonel Firman at about 9 a.m. My accusers were there, and their accusation was pruned down to, "Refusal to obey an order." The Colonel at first was for not hearing my defence; that is the usual course pursued with delinquents in the Army; but I pleaded very hard for a hearing, and obtained one. The point I tried to make was, that with six excused men as servants and only twelve men to do all the Company fatigues and guards, the Company officers should not put this duty on the latter. The Colonel very properly said that he would have me to know that he expected any order to be obeyed of whatever nature it might be. He asked me straightly if I were admonished if I would obey in future. I said, "Yes, sir. I simply wished to call

attention to the matter." He turned and said, "Captain —, I think I must let him off this time." "I fear you cannot, sir," said Captain —, and he told the Sergt.-Major to bring forward the blue records. But the Colonel said, "Admonished!" and I said, "Thank you, sir," and the Regimental Sergt.-Major said, "Right turn!" Outside the tent Lieut. — shook hands with me and said, . . . . . And that was the best of all.\*

In the afternoon I was stable guard, and the thunder and rain continued all through until late into the night. I was night guard, second relief with F. J. B. Lee.

A mail came up. I got four letters.

Church Parade under Palmer. The I.Y. men not in great force; but of other arms there was a fair turn out. Our young parson of the last trek officiated, and we liked him very much. The rainy season was upon us in earnest; the afternoon was again wet.

November 26.  
Reveille 7 a.m.  
Sunday.

We prepared to move camp a half-mile to the north side of the same hill which lies due west of Harrismith. We camped near the Artillery and Manchester lines. It was rumoured that we should trek on or about December 1st. We paraded our horses at noon. It rained every afternoon now.

November 26.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

Rifle inspection. I got a pass to Harrismith. I sent most of my notes home by registered post. I wrote some letters, bought some new clothes and some groceries. I returned to Camp at sunset to find that orders were out for a night march, and that four days' rations were to be taken. After the moon had set we rode out on the north road from Harrismith for two hours. The force consisted of a battalion of I.Y., some infantry and Artillery, two pom-poms and our Maxim Gun Section. At the end of two hours it was ascertained that we were on the wrong road, and all the waggons and Column turned westward and got on another road, and halted until daylight. Then we saw we were on the Bethlehem road, and at first break

November 27.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

\* What else transpired I never learned, but men of the firing line were never afterwards required to dig or erect officers' latrines.

of day we continued our march. We were told that General Campbell was pressed and needed assistance, as many of the enemy were harassing him.

November 28.

Of course we were up all night last night. Daylight only found us four or five miles from Harrismith.

General Boyes was in command. Thirty-fourth were centre reserve guard in front, under Brune, Colonel Firman riding with us. We made rapid progress all the morning, as fast as our infantry could manage to march. By noon we had made eighteen miles, and came in sight of General Campbell's Column trekking towards us on the other side of Elands River. Shortly after the Generals met and Boyes' Brigade returned six miles towards Harrismith and camped. Campbell's Brigade camped at Elands River. In the afternoon, under Agnew, I was one of a Cossack post three and a half miles south of camp. We examined a farm, on the way out, and the old Boer in possession, a heavy, bearded type of Boer, posed as a prophet who had foretold the war and the final subjugation of his people. He had a big Dutch family Bible open on his table, and he turned and read to us with great excitement verses from Isaiah, and expounded them in broken English as being prophecies against his people.

Our Cossack post was both an exposed and lonely one, and to make matters worse a thunderstorm came up with much lightning. We returned to camp just in time to meet a heavy downpour. I rolled myself in waterproof and blanket and slept it out, for I was very weary, having been on the constant go for thirty-six hours.

November 29.

Reveille was at dawn. Section II. under Napier were left rear guard. No Boers were seen. We got back to Harrismith Camp by midday. Clifford and Baker returned to the lines, two welcome acquisitions. Baker had been ill, and Clifford was giving up General's orderly duty.

November 30.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

I was one of four for ration fatigue to the town. I breakfasted in town with the fatigue party. There were again notices read out in Camp to men wishing to join the Police, but nothing comes of it; no man is allowed to join.

The recent rains had softened the earth and the ants were adding lobes of new work to some of the old hills.

This being St. Andrew's Day and many Scots living in Harrismith, there was a Scotch concert at the Hall. General Rundle and some of his Staff attended. I had a pass. I dined at the Grosvenor Hotel, and afterwards enjoyed the concert. Our wounded—Gray, F. W. Scott, J. Morgan, Thornton and Morris—went off to-day for Mooi River.

Napier and Barrington got their commissions confirmed to-day. There were now only eleven men available for Company duties. I got a concert pass, as some of our men were on the programme. Horncastle was amusing, and kept the audience in roars. A disgraceful row occurred on account of two young officers, with too much liquor aboard, who created a disturbance by a noisy interruption of the performers.

"It was, thank God, no officer of ours!"

The Hall was very crowded, and they were given to understand very plainly that if they did not remain quiet they would be pitched out neck and crop. I was on night guard with T. A. Scott, third relief.

December 2.  
Sunday.

Church Parade; very numerously attended. General Boyes was there. Napier was in charge of our Company. This was his first appearance as an officer.

In the afternoon I wrote many letters. We gave in to the stores everything we could spare. It was said that we were likely to go on trek again to-morrow. Our Company now lessened very considerably. Cholmeley, Caldwell, Ouvry, Hearne, F. J. B. Lee and others left on obtaining their discharges or on being invalided.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE WINBURG TREK

900.  
December 3.  
Beaville 6 a.m.

**I** WAS very ill of violent diarrhoea. I spent a horrible night. Palmer and Barrington came to me and strongly advised me to be invalided, for I was looking ill as well as feeling ill. I went to the doctor and he gave me medicine and ordered rest! We held ourselves in readiness to trek at 3 p.m., but we did not start until 4 p.m. I did not wish to leave my Company or for my Company to leave me. Meikle, who was also ill, joined me, and we rode out, taking it quietly with the rear guard. General Rundle inspected the Brigade before its departure. We camped four miles out near our old bridge. When Barrington saw me in camp he urged me to return to Harrismith, but I told him I wished to remain with the Company, and that I should be well in the morning, that Harrismith did not suit my health. He was kind enough to say that I had "done my share."

December 4.  
Beaville 8 a.m.

Started at 4.30., apparently on a Bethlehem road. Our destination was quite unknown to us. After a midday halt we pushed on to Elands River Bridge, eighteen miles from Harrismith. General Boyes was in command of the Brigade. We had four guns of the 77th and 79th Batteries, one pom-pom, Maxims, about 260 I.Y., and the East Yorks, and Manchester Infantry. We saw nothing of the enemy.

December 5.  
Beaville 8 a.m.

We marched in fine drizzling rain for ten miles, trekking in a north-westerly direction. Every one was drenched. None of the enemy was seen. I was still feeling desperately ill, and went again to the doctor. He



gave me medicine. Whilst I was at the doctor's Colonel Firman came up and spoke very kindly to me, and said he was sorry I was so ill. During the night it was very wet. Blankets were damp and clammy.

We went in a north-westerly direction for about fifteen miles. It looked as if we were making for Reitz. Boers attacked us on the right and left flanks and rather heavily on the left rear. Thirty-fourth was part of the right flank guard, but did not get into touch. The weather was very unsettled. In the afternoon we experienced another thunderstorm with heavy rain. The veldt was green, and the grass was getting long and luxuriant. We passed fields of green oats, saddle high. Many pretty wild flowers were in bloom. At noon the General managed to heliograph to Harrismith, Platberg station.

December 6.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

We rode eight miles into Reitz. I rode with Blount, who was also very ill. We found the garrison well, only occasionally disturbed by guerillas. The day was very fine. Three of the Manchester Mounted Infantry were either captured or killed in the right rear. They had dismounted and their horses stampeded on being fired at by some Boers. Nothing was heard of them after. We camped on the west side of Reitz. We found McDonnell, of the Military Police, here, and he rejoined our lines. Blount and J. C. McIlwraith had to go into hospital, being very ill. Thirty-fourth was getting attenuated indeed. In the afternoon N. Walker asked me to lasso a colt that was troubling the lines. I constructed a lasso out of some halter ropes and caught the colt, but broke the ring finger of my left hand, which caught in a headstall attached to the end of the rope. The doctor said the joint was twisted and put my hand in a splint. It was about full moon.

December 7.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

In the morning my finger was much swollen, and John Edwards filed off a ring that I had had on my finger for ten years. It was a painful operation. He held my hand on the tyre of the Maxim cart-wheel. It was a half an hour's job, as the ring was so far imbedded in the swelling. "Willie" did the work very skilfully.

December 8.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

We left Reitz at midday and travelled in a south-westerly direction for a few hours, and then almost due west. After trekking twelve miles we came to the deep drift of a river, and the transport was a great while crossing. Our Company waggons did not arrive until past nine. My hand gave me a great deal of pain, and I was still ill and run down. I was unable to get tea or supper. Jacoby and Edmondston sent me some coffee and biscuit. We saw Boers to-day, but only out of range. There was a little cannonading and pom-pom firing on our part.

December 9.  
Reveille 3 a.m.  
Sunday.

We started at 4.30, but a half-mile from camp we had to halt to await much of the transport which had been unable to cross the drift during the night. This caused a delay of two hours. We travelled generally in a direction south-west. At a little drift a heavily laden waggon was overturned. The accident was due to the very great carelessness of a Kaffir driver, and he was sjamboked in punishment by the transport rider. This again delayed the column a short while. The Pioneers dug for buried ammunition and arms at various farms. Two farms were burnt. Straggling bands of Boers were seen and the Artillery shelled them. Thirty-fourth Company was advance guard. We camped at one o'clock eight miles from the last camp. In the afternoon a reconnaissance was made to some farms. Thirty-fourth Company was excused and remained in camp. The grass almost everywhere has renewed itself.

December 10.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

The camp remained stationary to-day. There was a reconnaissance in force to the north-east to burn some farms. Force returned early in the afternoon.

December 11.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

We started at 4.40. Thirty-fourth Company was rear guard under Captain Brune. With Bowers I was rear road guide for the rear flank guards. Only three or four miles from camp a very brisk cannonading began and constant pom-pom fire. The Boers held a strong position at a Nek in the direct front. It took us half an hour to dislodge them, and then they took up sniping positions on kopje

ranges to our right and left. We came into range several times. We halted at noon for a midday rest, but the weather became so threatening and stormy that the General ordered camp to be pitched. In the afternoon there was a deluging rain and a thunderstorm. The camp was at a drift by J. C. de Villiers' Farm. A telegraph line crossed camp in a southerly direction, so that we must be at some point directly between Lindley and Bethlehem.

Captain Brune's stable boy and servant's helper, a young Boer, whom we nicknamed "Kruger," was to-day in a Boer farm garden (General Brand's Farm?), and noticing recently disturbed ground he dug and found an almost new Mauser rifle.

Thirty-fourth Company was reserve squadron with the guns and pom-poms. From camp we ascended a long slope of over four miles to a skyline. We travelled south-west. General Boyes rode near us for some hours. The guns searched the ridges to right and left. We only saw a few Boers at a great distance. They fired on one of the flank guards who burnt a farm on the right. Their range was very wild. Thirty-fourth were ordered to charge a kraal supposed to be held by Boers. Under Palmer and Napier we made a perfectly mad gallop to kopjes and ridges, but the enemy left. We galloped over some wicked-looking rifle pits under a kopje, that could not be seen from the distance of a few yards. They were sheer with the ground and the earth removed from their neighbourhood.

December 12.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

We camped twelve miles from last camp, within sight of the great Senekal Berge and even Wonderkop in the far distance. At one of our short halts Colonel Firman caught an immense green insect of the grasshopper type. It was beautifully tinted and was examined with much interest.

Thirty-fourth were left flank guard in line with the front waggon of the Convoy. We saw no enemy on our side, but along the right, from high ridges, firing was

December 13.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

constant. No one was hurt. We had a fine, hot day's march. For most of the day I was connecting file with Baker. Baker's horse gave out and I was left to work alone.

While I was now riding in the firing-line, I could not yet carry a rifle on account of my hand, which was painful and in splints. We arrived at Zand River crossing about seven or eight miles north-west of Biddulphsberg where we camped, and many men got a grateful plunge in the sandy pools in the afternoon.

September 14.  
veille  
9 a.m.

At 3.45 the 34th Company made a start on the Senekal Road, long before light. The moon was in the last quarter. I was advance left road guard with a member of the 35th Company as companion file. Kelsey with another 35th man was to the right of the road. The riding up of ridges and to kraals was exciting work. Five hundred yards in rear of us was Captain Brune with Lieutenant Barrington acting as his galloper. Captain Brune was directing the advance guard's movements. Thirty-fourth under Palmer and Napier were to the right, and 35th were to the left. The ground was surmised to be dangerous and was taken carefully. We met with little opposition. A few snipers' shots were all. As, soon after daylight, we neared the final ridge that hid the Senekal Kopje from our view, two scouts rode out from the 35th Company towards this ridge, and they were sniped by three shots and, thinking the ridge was held, they retired to report. Lieutenant Barrington rode forward to us and said to me, "Captain Brune says you must ride up that ridge, and remember there is a stone wall you will have to get through at the top, so be careful." My companion told me his horse was a slow one, and he would like to make the pace. I said my pony was fast, and it was the sort of thing to do as quickly as possible, to which he agreed, and I galloped for the ridge at as quick a pace as my pony could go. In a few minutes I reached the summit through a small opening in the wall, and just over the skyline was a big Kafir

kraal. About four hundred yards in the valley beyond, galloping towards Senekal, were two mounted men, but I had no rifle and they quickly got out of sight. My companion smartly joined me, and then to the right we saw Palmer and his men galloping around the foot of the hill we were on. Many Kaffirs swarmed out of the huts and told us that Boers were in Senekal; they did not know how many. We halted here until some Artillery and Infantry came up and some of the I. Y. flank guards. Colonel Firman ordered Palmer to take 34th at a gallop in extended order over the east (our left) end of Senekal Kopje—other Companies would follow, also a gun. We swept down at a good pace, and at the summit we were met by a Boer volley from the south side of Senekal. Palmer made us swerve, and we dismounted on the skyline and returned the fire. Our fire caused the enemy to leave the ridges, and the gun and a pom-pom and other Companies coming up to assist they were thrown into some confusion, and our shells, it was apparent, must have caused several casualties among them. After carefully scouting the spruits we entered the town. We were the first in and we bought bread, milk, and unripe fruit from various houses. We were informed that the main bodies of the enemy had left Senekal yesterday and this morning. We camped on the summit of the kopje on the site of our first battle.

By our entry into Senekal eight prisoners were released—Captain Lee, R.A., 65th Battery, and seven men of various Companies of mounted troops.

A cattle guard of ten men was required this morning. I slept last night most deeply and heavily as if nature had been a bit played out. I made a survey of the kopje for future reference, paying one of the Manchester Infantry to help me. We set stations by a hand compass and then paced the distances and noted the rise, fall, or declivities from the outline made by the stations. It was a rough method, and the compass was very restless for two reasons—the iron-stone stratum and the thunder-

December 15.  
Reveille 5 a.m.



storms in progress throughout the day. We worked hard at the notes from 11.30 to 3.30 (see page 92).

Two Malta M. I. released yesterday were temporarily attached to 34th to-day. Others were attached to various Companies.

Wilson had a narrow escape on the morning cattle guard. He rode out to a Kaffir kraal to try to buy eggs. When within about fifty yards of the kraal three men beckoned him to come on. They were Boers, and Wilson turned and galloped away under fire. He escaped unhurt.

December 16.  
Reveille 4. a.m.  
Sunday.

A reconnaissance in force was made to the south. I was unable to go. Two hours later heavy fire of pom-pom, cannon, and Maxim could be heard. The force returned at midday and said that the enemy had scattered on all sides after giving a volley or two. Boughton was grazed on a finger by a bullet. There were no other casualties.

At dusk I and six others of the Company were entered at the Brigade Field Hospital as unfit for field service for the present.

December 17.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

A reconnaissance in force was planned for the country lying in the direction of Trommel. The Manchester Infantry and two guns were left to occupy Senekal. The force went out at 4.30. Several of us did not go, but remained in the hospital lines. Towards the afternoon we heard firing in a south-west by west direction. I walked down with Frodsham, who was ill, to the farm at the foot of the kopje and bought some bread and butter. I then visited the lines of the Boer families we had picked up at various points on the trek to Senekal. There were altogether 150 men, women, and children. I found their views on the situation rather mixed. Several wished the war could be ended in any way. I was better, but my hand gave me much trouble, and my finger will always have a stiff joint.

December 18.

No news of our force. Hospital reveille was at 7.30. a.m. The doctor says "splints" for my hand.

The enemy's scouts came in close enough to be shelled from the kopje. The Artillery fired three or four shells into them. Meikle, Weisberg, Blyth and I were allowed to go to dinner in town at midday. I wrote some copies of the "Ballad of the 34th" for Napier and others who had asked for them. Weather dull and threatening, with lightning and rain during the night.

Reveille was late in the hospital lines. A small convoy of provisions went out to the camp of our little field force about five or six miles south-west. A picket claimed to have killed a Boer this morning. During the forenoon the Artillery again shelled a body of Boers scouting within cannon range. It was a very wet day and fears were entertained that the spruit would rise, so we evacuated Senekal soon after midday, taking our prisoners along. The rain drenched everything and everybody, and we were soaked also to our knees with mud and slush. I led my horse for comfort's sake. We joined the Brigade camp at sunset, when the sky cleared a bit. We were told that the force had made two reconnaissances from this camp with little or no result. They once came in sight of a few Boers, but the pom-pom pole broke at a critical moment. This camp was on Hendrik Delpoort's Farm, named Roodekop Farm.

December 19.

Thirty-fourth were rear guard. We started at 4.30. Some of our men look very much run down. I rode with several others in a waggon. We went on towards Winburg on an eastern road. We had views of Biddulphsberg, Tafelberg, and Witkop in our rear, and later we came into view of the Wittebergen and Wonderkop on our left. The Glamorgans were advance guard. At 10 a.m. we saw and heard firing on our left, and bullets whistled over the waggons. The Glamorgan's advance Scouts had run on to some sunk trenches of the Boers and were met by a rattling volley. Private Nell was instantly killed and Sergeant Thomas was wounded in two places—one bullet ploughing his cheek and piercing his ear. Thomas took it very nonchalantly. The Artillery, at quite close range, put shell

December 20.  
Reveille 3 a.m.



after shell among the fleeing Boers. The pom-pom had been disabled. We found some buried ammunition and burnt some farm outhouses near by. It was a curious coincidence that Private Nell should have been killed on Nel's Farm of Kareebosch, said to be the property of Nel the Fieldcornet killed by the 34th on May 25th at Senekal. The Column, which had been checked for a short while, then proceeded, and after a long march arrived in camp at 2.30 at Wildebeestelaagte, which was the farm of Dirk Uys. Upon our pitching camp the Boers came in and fired at our pickets, and our Infantry kept up a reply for some time. A great crowd attended the funeral of poor young Nell—nearly all the Imperial Yeomanry and Mounted Infantry and some of the Infantry and some of the prisoners. A band played, and all sang, "Nearer, my God, to Thee." The General was there, tall, dignified, and with a calm and kindly face; he is always a striking and distinguished figure. The Lieutenant commanding the Glamorgans read the service.

Blyth and Weisberg returned to the lines to-day. T.A. Scott rode on horseback with the hospital waggons, looking very, very ill.

There was a fine and vivid rainbow towards the evening.

December 21.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

Weather cleared after heavy rain last night. We started at 4.30. At nine the cannon shelled the kopjes to the right. Not many Boers were seen all day. We did not keep to the road, but the waggons marched six or seven abreast over the veldt, bearing in a south-westerly direction—towards Winburg. We made a long but not unpleasant march. Thirty-fourth were reserve squadron with one of the guns. The recent rains had freshened the colour of the country. Since the camp at De Villiers' Farm the prevailing colour had been khaki, indicating an insufficiency of rain within that district. A dozen sick men rode on our waggon, on which there were two wretched sheep tied by the legs, and besides these there were tents and kits. A sick officer had one mule waggon

all to himself. Meikle, Green, Weedon, Frodsham, Wilson, and others were on our waggon. We camped about three or four miles north-east of Winburg on Pete Maré's Farm, Klipplaatsfontein.

We arrived at Winburg about 9 a.m., and camped in the northern precincts of the town. I felt very ill all day. I was dismissed the field hospital because I did not wish to join a base hospital, and I hoped to recover enough for duty in a few days. The doctor gave me medicine, but I could neither eat nor do efficient work. The severe service lately had searched out every one of us, and the Company looked a wreck of itself. I came very near to throwing up the sponge, for I was so disheartened. Only my ardent desire to see it through with my Company lent me pluck enough not to give in and to hold myself daily in hand. The doctor gave me a "Ride with the Convoy at present" note. I went into Winburg to send a cablegram for one of the men on duty. I wrote two short letters and returned to camp and went to bed before dark.

December 22.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

Blyth, Green, T. A. Scott, Fortescue, and others were obliged to go into the Town Army Hospital.

During the past week or so I had an opportunity of taking a few notes of the composition of the Convoy and transport, types of waggons and carts, kinds of draught stock, horses, mules, and oxen, and other particulars. The following is an outline:—

The waggon with the tarpaulin over bent ribs and the army waggon with box sides of equal height, the Cape cart, the ambulance, the van, water-carts and barrels on wheels, double-barrelled water-carts, regulation water-cart, ammunition waggon, mules—teams of ten, twelve, and sixteen, and oxen sixteen in a team, and their colours matched in a good team.

The loads and the methods of loading of waggons, the biscuit-loaded waggons, the kit-loaded waggons, grain-loaded waggons—mealies, oats, &c., in sacks of every sort — meat-loaded waggons, jam-loaded waggons, sugar,

firewood, utensils, dixies, swung beds for drivers, the thousand and one things suspended from the poles, guards, side racks, and stays of the waggons, buckets, ropes, cables, spare yokes and pins, Kaffir crocks or pots.

December 28.  
Reveille 5 a.m.  
Sunday.

An order to trek was countermanded, for the Convoy was not ready.

At this time I realised that if I did not follow the example of several others in the Company and hire a Kaffir boy to help me in my cooking, kit carrying, and similar service I should very likely go under. I obtained a pass to the town, and at the transport yard I got a likely looking Basuto boy on terms of one pound a month and his rations. His name was Jacob.

Captain Brune was appointed Aide to General Boyes, and he again left our Company for the Staff to-day. He called around at the tents and said that it would be always his pleasure to do what he could for the 34th Company, that he would try to further the interests of those men who desired to get Police or other billets.

Winburg is the terminus of a branch railway from the main line. We saw several trains passing the camp with small parties of troops. Eighty of the Manchester Infantry left for Pretoria to go into training for Mounted Infantry.



## CHAPTER XXX

### WINBURG TO SENEKAL

had been hoped among our men that we should be allowed to spend Christmas in Winburg, but that was to be. We received orders to be ready to trek at seven o'clock. No one knew our destination—some held that we were going to Kroonstad, others to Lindley, Harri-son, or to occupy Tafelberg, according to individual opinion. After a midday halt we marched until sunset in a direction somewhat north of east. It was a fine, warm

1900.  
December 24.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

About three hundred of the Colonial mounted men joined the Brigade at Winburg; we do not know how long. Some of them are old hands who have served; most of them are new and raw and are not riders, nor Colonials. We camped at Kaffir Kop in the direction of Besters Flats. No Boers were seen all

the day. We trekked at 4.45 a.m., apparently north-east, but very slowly and indirectly I could not judge our direction. At 8 o'clock we came into touch with the 34th Brigade, which was stated to be part of Colonel Buller's Division or Brigade. Thirty-fourth and 35th Brigades formed the advance guard. We halted, and our transport officers were ordered to hand over sixteen waggons of provisions. Buller is now in command of 34th. Of the enemy two Cape carts were seen to-day, which some of our men followed, but suspecting from their movements that they were decoys the pursuit was given up. At midday the 34th Brigade crossed a drift into a little plain between

December 25.  
Reveille 3 a.m.  
Christmas Day.

three round kops, two of which a guide told me were called Spy Kop and Leeuw Kop. For the rest of the day we were allowed to spend Christmas as best we could under the circumstances. The General officially wished us a merry Christmas. Rations were made plentiful. An impromptu sing-song was got up. Carols were sung. The 35th Company decorated a Christmas tree, which was very amusing. All kinds of odd things—empty jam pots, and tins and odd garments and socks—were the gifts.

Many idle rumours were about—that De Wet was in the neighbourhood and beset by many of our columns, &c. Movements are being kept very secret.

We saw many wildebeeste and buck to-day, and two wildebeeste or gnu calves were brought into camp.

The following is a roll of the Company on Christmas morning, December 25, 1900 :—

Lieutenant Palmer (commanding).	Horncastle.	Walker, Geo. A.
Lieutenant Napier.	Hicks.	Walker, Nigel.
Lieutenant Barrington.	Hunt.	Wilshin, T. J.
Agnew.	Heenan.	Wilshin, E. V.
Boughton.	Jacoby.	Wilson.
Burrows.	Isard.	Weedon, F. J.
Baker.	Kelsey.	Weedon, H.
Bowers.	Lee, T.	Weisberg.
Cowan.	Meikle.	
Clifford.	Marriott.	Gun Section.
Corner.	McIlwraith, J. H.	(Maxim attached).
Day.	Paparritor.	
Edwards.	Phillips.	Hall.
Edmondston.	Ralli.	Canny.
Frodsham.	Roberts.	Campbell.
Grout.	Richards.	Stephen.
	Smyth.	Smart.

#### BATTALION STAFF.

Peacock, B.S.M.  
Langley, Q.M.S.M.  
Hides, O.R. Sergt.

#### ATTACHED TO GENERAL'S STAFF.

Captain Prideaux Brune  
Pte. McKechnie  
Pte. Robinson

December 26.

Reveille had been ordered at 4.30, but in the night an order came around altering it to 3.30, and we all got up

and were ready to trek. Then another order came to us to "stand to," and then to outspan and off saddle again.

We finally resaddled and started at 10.30, rounded Leeuw Kop and marched five or six miles in an easterly direction and camped. The position of camp seemed to form the apex of a triangle of which Winburg and Senekal formed the other angles, twenty miles distant on about the west and north. This was as near as I could make out our bearings. The Colonials parted with us here and went to our left as a separate column. Thirty-fourth was rear guard to-day. I was afternoon grazing guard. The 35th men got their young gnu to be suckled by a goat, but failed to induce it to accept a mare as a foster-mother. Thirty-fourth discovered ninety sacks of good flour at a farm, and it was subsequently put into stores. My hand was still disabled and in splints.

We stood to our horses ready saddled until ten o'clock, and then we started in a north-east by east direction for Senekal. It came out in orders that a body of troops under Colonel Firman were to garrison Senekal until January 4th. The force consisted of half the Manchester Infantry, about 400 men, one Battalion of I.Y. (about 250 men), some Manchester M.I., a couple of 15-pounders, a pom-pom, and Maxim.

December 27.  
Reveille 5. a.m.

The rest of the Brigade under General Boyes, including, I think, the Colonials, which we passed on leaving camp, returned to Winburg.

During the delay in the morning Napier told me not to trouble to fall in the lines to-day, so I rode near the advanced gun almost all day. It was fine, clear, and hot.

Thirty-fourth were left advance guard under Palmer, Napier, and Barrington. As our Column approached Senekal the kopje was shelled and about two hundred of the enemy galloped out of Senekal, some by the north road and others over the kopje. Thirty-fourth now galloped around to the left, not very far out from the Column and well within sight of us. Palmer rode, somewhat in

advance of his Company, to the rise overlooking the spruit to examine the ground when Napier pushed forward to him and said, "Look here, old chap, I can't see you take all the risks!" For a moment the Company paused on the skyline when the enemy were observed in the spruit, and the enemy upon seeing that their presence was discovered opened fire with a murderous volley. Napier was shot through the wrist and stomach. He maintained strength to canter with the rest to cover, when Jacoby and others helped him from his horse. This was about 1.30 or 2 o'clock p.m. From where I was I could see the attack, and that some untoward incident had occurred. Napier's wound was at once seen to be a dangerous one. That afternoon there was much sadness in our lines, for he was a great favourite with every one. Camp was again pitched on the top of the kopje.

December 28.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

To-day was the anniversary of my attestation. I had been one year a soldier of the Queen.

An operation was performed by Dr. House on Napier, as successfully as could be hoped for, but there was little hope held out of recovery.

Some Boers ventured in close enough to snipe at our Artillery and the kopje pickets. The fire was returned.

God help us! Napier died at 12.55. The first of our old Section III., Knightsbridge Barrack Room, to go out. The best and most lovable. It is a sad blow to us. Clifford was with him when he died. Barrington had only just left him. He and Barrington were close friends. His coffin was placed on a gun. All who could, officers and men of the whole force, attended the funeral. Colonel Firman read the service. The bearers were Agnew, Clifford, Edmondston, Faber, Jacoby, and Richards. The poor boy was buried between the cemetery wall and the grave of Major Dalbiac.

A good and brave comrade gone! Some of his last words, as his mind wandered, were an order to the Company, "Keep extended, 34th!" which was quite characteristic of his natural and constant thoughtfulness.





BASIL NAPIER.

Died of Wounds, December 28, 1900.

*To face page 352.*



T. ALLISON SCOTT.

Died of Enteric, December 30, 1900.



1

2

3

of others. There were other heartrending words spoken and some messages of a private nature.

I was night guard last night and stable guard to-day. Duties were heavy owing to the small number of men available for duty.

December 29.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

About twenty Boers, mostly without arms, gave themselves up in little groups to-day. They said that they had been forced unwillingly into the field.

A party of the enemy fired briskly at our Kaffirs on the north side of the kopje. The Artillery shelled them. We heard a bullet or two whistle overhead as we waited in line for the doctor this morning at 10 a.m.

This morning at two o'clock Palmer called for twenty men, dismounted, to go out to surprise a farm west of Senekal. They lay in wait for a band of Boers until after daylight, but returned without any encounter.

December 30.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

In the forenoon we viewed from the top of the kopje two ambulances and a Cape cart coming in. We watched them with anxiety. They proved to contain four wounded men of the Montgomery and Pembroke I.Y. of White's Division. One was their Captain, who was shot in four or five places. They had suddenly run against an ambush near Hammonia.

It was a quiet day and some of the men fell to cooking as an amusement. Kelsey even went so far as to construct some primitive-looking jam tarts.

There was a heavy thunderstorm last night. All the tents were flooded.

December 31.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.

A force of I.Y. went out to the east end of Tafelberg to get into helio communication with another Column. Particulars were secret. Only 15 men of 34th went. I was grazing guard with Boughton. The force returned at 3 p.m. Just afterwards the Colonials, Kaffrarians, and others came in with Colonel Crewe. They camped under us on the south side of the kopje.

I was night guard, third relief, and although I was on guard from 11 p.m. to one in the morning, it did not

occur to me that the birth of another year and century had taken place.

1901.  
January 1.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

Another wet and stormy day with much thunder and lightning, especially towards the evening. The sun set in a bank of lurid cloud and colour. Fifty men of the I.Y. went out in the morning on the Winburg Road, expecting to meet the incoming Convoy. At 2 p.m. some of 34th Company followed. Later in the afternoon the long column of General Boyes was sighted, and it soon trailed into Senekal below us.

They brought sad news indeed. Poor, dear T. A. Scott, whom we had seen go into hospital at Winburg, ten days ago, was dead—had been some days dead—snuffed out by enteric. One of our very best. Again, God help the 34th! One of the 36th was also dead.

Ingram, of Hibernia Stores, his wife, and a dozen Boers from the Klip Nek district, came in in the afternoon. He told us that there had been severe fighting at Hammonia last week. That a Commandant Steyn and a body of the enemy had been captured. The Convoy brought in a mail. I got two letters. Faber, Frodabam, and Weedon, junr., have gone into hospital.



GRAVE OF MAJOR DALHAC, AT SENECHAL.

*To face page 35A.*



GRAVE OF T. ALLISON SCOTT, AT WINBURG.





## CHAPTER XXXI

### RIETPAN AND BLAAUWKOP

The Imperial Yeomanry went out at 7 a.m. to reconnoitre. I did not accompany them. Senekal was to bearrisoned by a small force. At 2 p.m. the transport ordered to move. We marched out on a Lindley in a north-easterly direction, passing Biddulphsberg, which was four or five miles to our right. On the way we met an ambulance with Alf. Izard in it, wounded. Thirty-fourth had been advance guard in the morning and viewed Boers in the distance. A Cossack post was ordered, and Edmonston and Izard in going out to occupy position were fired on by the enemy at 500 yards, Izard had been shot in the arm above the elbow; the arm was severely broken. We camped near a branch of the Rietpan Spruit.

1901.  
January 2.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

We started at 5.30 a.m. Thirty-fourth nominally reconnoitred, became centre advance guard. Whenever a chance offered to be in the front Palmer took it. We only got a long range touch with the enemy. The cannon touched them a short while. We trekked about fifteen miles apparently in a north-easterly direction. Compasses were erratic in these thunderous days. We camped at 1 o'clock. Two hours after, the 35th and 36th Companies rode out with a part of the Convoy apparently on a side road, perhaps only to pass on provisions to the 1st Column.

January 3.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

We started on the road at 4.45, but only went a half a mile when orders came from the Brigade-Major to return

January 4.  
Reveille  
3.15 a.m.



## CHAPTER XXXI

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1901.  
January 3.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

We started at 5.30 a.m. Thirty-fourth nominally reserve, became centre advance guard. Whenever a chance offered to be in the front Palmer took it. We only got into long range touch with the enemy. The cannon shelled them a short while. We trekked about fifteen miles apparently in a north-easterly direction. Compasses were erratic in these thunderous days. We camped at one o'clock. Two hours after, the 35th and 36th Companies rode out with a part of the Convoy apparently on a Lindley road, perhaps only to pass on provisions to another Column.

January 3.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

We started on the road at 4.45, but only went a half a mile when orders came from the Brigade-Major to return

January 4.  
Reveille  
3.15 a.m.

to camp, which we did, and we pitched on exactly the same lines as we had vacated a half-hour previously. The I.Y. were ordered to remain saddled. In half an hour the Boers fired on our outposts. Thirty-fourth galloped out in a north-westerly direction and sighted some Boer waggons making off in the distance and followed them for four or five miles. Our force was too small to make an attack, and had to return without result. Boers were also shelled in another direction. From the north troops from Lindley came to get a part of our convoy. The site of this camp was less than seven miles south of Lindley.

January 5.  
Reveille 8 a.m.

Our pickets were sniped during the night. To-day was the first anniversary of our entering barracks at Knightsbridge.

We trekked in a direction south-east by east, and marched with a very long transport train made up of waggons and teams not required at Lindley, and a new column made up of five or six hundred of Bethune's Horse and others accompanied us. We pitched our camp on the ground we occupied on December 11, 1900, which I named De Villiers' Farm, called Sterkfontein. Meikle, Wilson, Wilshin, and I did a troublesome grazing guard in the afternoon. There was a multitude of transport and other stock about and a deep creek, into which our horses insisted on falling, one or two being nearly drowned. We had to cut the headstalls of some which were knee-haltered.

Great secrecy is maintained as to our future movements.

More of our 34th are falling out. J. Howard McIlwraith (the younger) has gone into hospital very ill of enteric. I bid him goodbye.

Colonel Munro is in command of the mounted troops.

January 6.  
Reveille 8 a.m.  
Sunday.

We were on the road north-east long before light, and when the sun rose it seemed as if we had been a long time on trek. We were travelling on the road we kept from Reitz on December 11th.

The Boers began sniping at the rear as soon as camp

lost me nearly 3 months  
left on the yaldt to die  
I couldn't bring myself to  
shoot him although I pointed  
the rifle at his head



No 8. A Bant. 5 days died  
the smallest horse  
I have had



No 9. - do taken from me  
for the Generals Cape Cart  
about 10 days.



No 10. A Hungarian left  
on the road between Riet  
& Harriemith lane



No 11. an Argentine (July 11)  
+ I hope to goodness the  
last horse I will ride  
for some months to come.

No 1. lost at nightland  
came from London's had  
him about 3 months.



No 2. I gave her to a friend  
who was going out the  
general staff. to save her  
as I was very fond of her.  
She is still alive & well  
14 months



No 3. an English Mare cast  
at Winburg abt 14 days.



No 4. a Hungarian. no good  
headed over to another troop  
8 days.



No 5. an Argentine. good still  
alive taken over by the  
Tugiant about 1 month



No 6. an Argentine no good.  
Exchanged with a Boer  
farmer for no 7.  
about 6 days.



was broken, and by the time we arrived at the Nek (December 11th) they opened on our right and left too. The Artillery was kept very busy, and the column halted when they reached the north side of the Nek. Shortly after we arrived at the camp which we had occupied during the nights of December 9th and 10th.

Thirty-fourth had already ridden into camp when a sudden call came for mounted troops, and Palmer shouted, "Get mounted, 34th!" and galloped to the assistance of the rear guard and rear gun, which were very hard pressed by the enemy. The determination of the attack was quite a surprise, and a smart rear-guard action was in hand before any one realised it. Boers had broken through and dispersed the guard of Bethune's and then went for the Manchester Company of Infantry rearguard, who were in the open, and drove them towards the gun. The gun stood its ground; three of its men were badly wounded, and it suffered the loss of all its horses but one.\* One of the Pom-pom Section died of wounds, and others were wounded. The Manchesters again advanced, bending before a storm of bullets as if they had been warding off hail. It was a hot time. One of the Manchesters was killed. In the meanwhile the I.Y. had flanked the attacking Boers. Palmer took 34th from ridge to ridge as the enemy retreated. The Boers must have suffered heavily. Our men at one moment came under a terrible fire as they topped a ridge, but dismounting they returned it with interest. Palmer found a dead Boer officer on the ridge, and some wounded Boers were found at a farm. The Boers fired on our ambulance which was sent out to fetch their wounded. Although our Company was in the thick of it no one was hurt but Palmer. He seemed to bear a charmed life. A bullet had passed through the waterbottle slung at his back and another had pierced a crease of his breeches at the right thigh and just scratched the skin. The enemy were in considerable

\* A Sergeant who acted rather well, "buzzing away single-handed," I believe got the D.C.M.

force, and it was surmised that they thought themselves hemmed in. The name of the place was Rietpan. In about an hour camp had settled down to quietness. In the afternoon Colonel White came into camp, and we learned that the Columns of both White and Knox were within two or three miles of us. It was also said that a laager of 800 Boers was somewhere in the neighbourhood.

I caught on the veldt a young "sand tit," a tiny species of tit which rises in considerable flocks from the long grass and mealie fields as we scout along. They fly in little jerks or leaps, and chirp a short note in irregular chorus.

Dr. House operated on a Boer wounded in the head. A Staats Artilleryman, who had remained with his wounded comrade, elected to surrender although he was given the option of release.

We started very early, and at a slow pace, in a southeasterly direction. At nine o'clock we could see brigades to our right and left flanks, marching parallel with us. We saw nothing of the enemy, but the Kaffirs at the kraals said that a large commando had preceded us a few hours. We arrived before midday at Blaauwkop, at the foot of which is Jan Prinsloo's Farm. The proprietor was said to be a brother of our friend the General of that name. At a farm we discovered a large batch of dough in preparation for a big bread-baking for the enemy. I was on ration fatigue in the afternoon, and managed to buy some badly-needed cooking fat from the butcher. Grass was good about here; the gardens at kraal and farm were well stocked. I got some nearly ripe peaches at the farm, and my boy Jacob made them into a capital stew. General Boyes was reported to be quite indisposed to-day.

My Basuto boy I have found a great help to me during this week or two of my disability and illness. I hardly know what I should have done without him.

It was said to be known that over a dozen Boers were put out of action yesterday, and there were some wounded prisoners.

January 7.  
Reveille  
3.15 a.m.

January 8.  
Leveille 8 a.m.

We started long before daylight on the Senekal Road (south-west by west). We took a meandering course from Blaauwkop for four or five miles, and we saw a brigade ahead of us marching in our direction. We made a mid-day halt near a kop similar to Blaauwkop. Our movements were kept a mystery to the troops. We could see Jan Prinsloo's Farm outhouses burning in the far rear. We continued our march and came in view of Witkop and the Senekal bergs over fifteen miles off. We camped at 5 p.m. on the steep slope of a rocky ridge. Thirty-fourth had little to do to-day, being with the main guard. A Boer who was severely wounded in the head on January 6th by a shell was still alive, in spite of the fact that a portion of his skull was gone, and that he had remained unconscious.

There was great discontent in the Imperial Yeomanry lines throughout because no prospects were held out of an early home going. Four of our men had gone into hospital during the past week. Jacoby was now suffering terribly from neuralgia.

January 9.  
Leveille 8 a.m.

Thirty-fourth were a part of the rear guard, and moved at 6 a.m. The Boers sniped at very long range. We travelled towards the north end of Biddulphsberg, which with Witkop was in view all day. We saw a Column preceding us, said to be that of General Knox. We knew nothing of the meaning or intention of movements. There was a three hours' midday halt and a long afternoon trek, and we pitched camp on a portion of the battlefield of Biddulphsberg where the Grenadiers were burnt. Columns were to be seen to our right, left, and front. The Convoy took some time crossing Zand Spruit. We had come about fifteen miles. The wounded Boer died on trek to-day, and was buried in the afternoon. His name was Rensberg.

January 10.  
Leveille  
15 a.m.

We rode into Senekal by a rather circuitous road, rounding the north-east end of Biddulphsberg. One of the G.M.P. requested me to give chase to a Kaffir who had stolen a large quantity of leaf tobacco from a farm.

I raced him towards Senekal; he thought he had the better horse, and turned to jeer. I knew my horse better, and seeing that I gained he threw down the tobacco in a drift. I still followed him and caught him and took him to his boss, a transport rider. This man said he was a bad lot, and gave him the sjambok by way of punishment. The Convoy split and came in on separate roads. Thirty-fourth camped on the south side of the kopje, the Convoy camped on the north side. Campbell, of the Gun Section, was much better and rejoined. Izard was as well as could be expected with such a wound. Weedon, Frodsham, Faber, were still very ill.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE NECRAMO NEK TREK

1901.  
January 11.

**E**ARLY this morning a Convoy with the sick men trekked out to Winburg. Of our men Izard, Faber, Frodsham, Weedon, jun., Jacoby, and others were obliged to go. One of the columns accompanied the Convoy.

Orders were issued for us to be ready to leave Senekal at 1.30 p.m. I was on ration and forage fatigue to the town. We packed a lot of mealies on the Company waggons. Campbell was on this fatigue—only just returned to the lines from his illness.

We evacuated Senekal. Thirty-fourth was right flank guard, but we saw nothing of the enemy. A few Boers in front and rear were shelled.

It rained very heavily, and the men were much exposed to a fearful storm of pelting rain, thunder, and lightning. Every one became drenched. I had no cloak, and was soaked and chilled to the bone. We went out in a Lindley direction, but owing to the condition of the road we only made five or six miles. Towards sunset the rain ceased, but men were cold and miserable, with chattering teeth. A beautiful rainbow and—a rum issue somewhat cheered our spirits!

January 12.  
Bevells  
8.15 a.m.

I was on kit-packing fatigue with Bradley. The kits were awfully wet and heavy, and the job took us some time. We left the Lindley Road, making almost due east, around the north end of Biddulphsberg, and by eight o'clock we passed our camp of January 9th, and again



occupied some time in crossing the spruit there. The water was very high. There was a midday halt of three hours. In the afternoon we trekked north-east by east on the course we came on January 9th. We camped about six or seven miles north-east of Biddulphsberg. We got some more green peaches to-day. As advance guard 34th met none of the enemy, but some shelling went on in the rear. The Colonials who left us yesterday at the first spruit seemed to be having a warm time to our left on a Lindley road, for we heard heavy firing in that direction.

The maize is beginning to tassel, so that we shall soon be able to have "roasting ears."

I was able to carry my rifle to-day for the first time since my accident at Reitz on December 7th.

For the Brigade, reveille was at 4.45, but with Meikle and Heenan under Ralli as corporal, I was on ration fatigue at an earlier hour. We rode with Cowan in a waggon to the Army Service Corps Camp, and drew rations for horse and man for four days.

January 12.  
Sunday.

Thirty-fourth were rear guard under Palmer. With Palmer's permission I rode with a full bandolier only, because a rifle was still awkward to me with my stiff hand.

The Convoy had proceeded but three miles when the West Kents, who were advance guard, discovered a large force of the enemy in front, just beyond Necramo Nek. The Convoy hastily took cover, bunching together under the left kopje of the Nek. We were on an eastward road going towards Bethlehem. The Artillery and Infantry quickly took up positions along the high ridges on either side of the Nek. Hardly was this done before a tremendous sound of rifle fire, shelling, and Maxim fire broke out, alike from us and the Boers. There was nothing of a surprise about their attack—our positions were quickly indicated and instantly occupied—but, somehow, fifteen-pound shells and Maxim fire was sufficiently unusual to come within the nature of a surprise. Their

shells pitched dangerously near our Convoy, but did little damage. Seventeen sheep were killed by a shell which burst in a flock. For hours the pounding and firing was kept up. Thirty-fourth occupied a high ridge to the left of the Convoy, and to the left rear of the engaged Infantry and Artillery. At times we came under fire, but it was not of much severity. At 3.30 p.m. an order came from Colonel Firman for all the Imperial Yeomanry to assemble on the high ridge to the right of the Nek. A number of officers were there with Firman, closely examining with their glasses the Boer positions. When the Companies had been got together, instructions were issued as to their formation and position in the Battalion. A right flanking charge on the Boer positions had been determined upon. We rode over the ridge into the open in the following order: 36th, 35th, 34th, 4th Glamorgan, and the Manchester Mounted Infantry. We were in an extended formation, with a few advance scouts who led off to the left to the highest but nearest rocky point of the enemy's position. After the 36th had diverged to rush this point, the 35th led for a few moments. The Boers only waited to put in one or two wild volleys, and although we heard bullets and saw where they struck the ground near us, not a hit was made. The 35th took the kraal at the end of the downward slope, and dismounted and fired at retreating Boers. There was still a long ridge to the left, three-quarters of a mile away, and Palmer rode on, increasing the pace to racing; he swung his arm for direction and shouted "Come on, 34th!" and then in a long-drawn, resonant chant, "Come on, boys!" It was never very difficult to follow when Palmer led, and without waiting a second all galloped on, singing and chanting in various tones a wild and primitive sort of music. We none of us knew if we were facing death or not, we should not know until the skyline was reached—we were taking chances, that was all. As it happened only a few shots were fired at us, and before we got to our goal the Kents were firing at a fleeing enemy, their

volleys passing high over our heads. For the moment we did not know if the firing was of friend or foe. Once on the skyline the Boers were viewed by us in full retreat, and then 34th dismounted and poured in volley after volley at an escaping enemy. We were right on some trenches from which the Boers had been firing all day; our little charge was over, and the day's fighting at an end. The only casualties on our side for the day were three wounded Infantrymen—Stafford Infantry. There were twelve dead Boer horses, some of them saddled, on the field. Three or four Boers hiding in the rocks were captured.

What were more attractive, in Palmer's eyes, were a half a dozen loose, saddled, and riderless horses on our right rear. Bidding Phillips and Edmondston to follow him he dashed after them for a couple of miles and rounded them up. They were well-equipped horses, and our enemy must have been in a desperate hurry to leave them on the field, or, perhaps, their owners had been put out of action. There was booty of cloaks, blankets, furs, saddles, wallets, and glasses. Phillips got a very pretty little pony, and the Company was the richer by a few good remounts.

We held our position for an hour or two, and during that time the Convoy made its way south of the Nek eastward, to the foot of two high and almost precipitous bergs or kops. One or two Boers were caught on the summit; they were cut off from retreat. They had gone up there to get a good range of us and had got "treed"; they had not calculated on our movements.

We had a long day and only came five miles east of our morning camp. I was for night guard, first relief.

General Boyes, in the evening, graciously issued the following order :—

NECRAMO NEK,

*January 18, 1901.*

4. The troops on the ridge to-day witnessed with admiration a charge on a Position as bold and as daring as any soldier could wish to see.

The Major-General commanding thanks Lieut.-Col. Firman for his gallant leading and congratulates the Officers, N.C.O., and men on their brilliant success.

By order,  
(Signed) C. B. FITZHARRY, Capt.,  
Brigade-Major.

The 34th may be pardoned if they thought that the most gallant leading of that day's charge was done by a Lieutenant of their Company.

Thirty-fourth were right flank guard, and we rode out over some very irregular and dangerous country. We had not been out ten minutes before we got a few shots at us. An hour later we got it hot on a ridge we had taken, and we dismounted and fired many volleys. When those Boers had cleared we saw a lot more to the rear and left. The Artillery coming up gave them a few shells to mend their pace.

We soon struck a telegraph line, probably the Senekal-Bethlehem line, and we saw that we were going almost due east. At Necramo Nek the Senekal Bergs and Witkop could be seen in the western distance.

We went on, Palmer literally storming ridge after ridge, and some very hard riding was done. We came under fire several times. The shelling and firing continued until we came in sight of Bethlehem, when we rested for three hours. Under Corporal Edmondston, with five others, I was on Cossack post. We did half-hour "go." I was on last relief during a thunderstorm. Two men came up on our left skyline and Edmondston, to make sure that there should be no mistake, ordered us to fire. At a volley they quickly disappeared.

We rode into Bethlehem just before sunset.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### REITZ EVACUATED

**T**HERE was a late reveille this morning. I was one of 1901.  
January 15.  
the morning grazing guards.

Bethlehem was garrisoned by about eight hundred men altogether. There were two guns, trenches, and barbed-wire entanglements. The 62nd men told us they were awfully tired of garrison duty. There was a good deal of enteric, and some men had been killed and wounded by snipers and decoys. The place was in helio communication with Harrismith, but the signallers had to take a high kopje, every day, some distance out, in order to get into touch. I was told that indirectly (through Bethlehem) General Boyes had been in communication with General Rundle at Harrismith on the 13th during our fight. Extreme secrecy was maintained as to our movements. Orders were expected through for us to continue our march to-morrow. We could hear the sound of cannon in the west.

The country looked well and fresh. Swallows in considerable numbers congregated on the telegraph line. Rains and storms were frequent. As morning stars Venus and Jupiter were in conjunction.

We rode out of Bethlehem up an interminable ridge to the north-east by east. We found no Boers and waited some hours for the Convoy to come up. January 16.  
Reveille 8 a.m.

An advance guard then went forward and we saw that they were soon fired on—a few bullets came our way and whistled over our heads. Palmer immediately ordered us to advance, to assist, and by a right-flank



came upon thirty or forty Boers and fired upon them. Then the Glamorgan Imperial Yeomanry went out still further to the right, and the enemy not only opened fire but followed down to our position and wounded a horse. They quickly retired and we rode back to camp. We had trekked ten or twelve miles.

January 17.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

Thirty-fourth were advance guard under Palmer and Barrington. We followed the Bethlehem-Reitz telegraph line. We scouted some bad country and got shot at from right and left. We sighted a great many Boers in Tiger Kloof, about five miles from the last camp. We charged a position on a high round kopje to our front, where we had seen the enemy, but they had gone to the right, and sniped us from there. General Boyes and Colonel Firman came up with the main guard, and the Boers on the right were pounded for an hour by cannon and pom-poms. We saw some very neat shooting, which cleared out a lot of the enemy. Then the General decided to halt for three hours. This was about twelve miles south or south-west of Reitz.

Thirty-fourth again started as advance guard at 1.30 p.m. and continuing on the Reitz Road took, with little opposition, Houtkop and the succeeding ridges. During the afternoon the rear guard was harassed by constant sniping. At 4 p.m. we came in sight of Reitz and we met four Reitz scouts. In another hour we entered Reitz. We found that J. C. McIlwraith was dead of enteric. One more good comrade less! A comrade who was ever wishful to do to others as he would be done by. Blount was better, but still very ill.

January 18.

Reveille was late. I cleaned the stable lines with Kelsey. In the afternoon there was the usual thunderstorm, and we got wet. It rained all the night.

January 19.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

A force went ten miles out to a farm. It brought in the Nobles (of Reitz) and two other families. Thirty-fourth followed a Cape cart and swam a deep swollen stream, and came under fire; the cart got away and the stream, a dangerous one, had again to be swum. Force returned at 4 p.m.

I was night guard second relief. I was wet and chilled with the rain, and Lieutenant Palmer brought me a glass of port, which was indeed a godsend!

The men were turned out to answer the roll-call, a most unusual proceeding. At 9.30 ten mounted men were made stable guard, just outside of the lines. This was also unusual, and the men knew no reason for the sudden discipline from above.

January 20.  
Reveille 5 a.m.  
Sunday.

There was a rum ration, but it was so diluted as to be almost pure water!

J. C. McIlwraith's effects were sold by auction in the lines. I bought some of the clothes.

It was a fine, cool day.

Thirty-fourth was rear guard, and went out of Reitz some time after all had cleared. Reitz was evacuated and there were only one or two families remaining in the town. The enemy must have been watching us closely, for we had not reached the ridges south-east of town in rear of the departing column before we saw Boer scouts ride down into the town, and we passed the compliment of a shot or two. I was much struck by the accurate judgment of the Boers as to distance—they seemed to estimate to a few yards our effective range. The atmosphere was very clear as we left, and we could see our bullets strike short of them. They did not waste many shots. Less than half an hour after we left Reitz, a small Boer force was making itself free there. The garrison had consisted of East York infantry, some guns, and some Imperial Yeomanry.

January 21.  
Reveille 8 a.m.

Sniping continued on our right, left, and rear, and the pom-pom was kept busy all the morning. On the road five Boers surrendered. For some months past practically every ridge had had to be taken at a gallop; there might or might not be Boers on the top or commanding the top—the odds were that there would be. The signal for precaution, "Ten horses' length extend!" or "Five horses' length extend!" came so often that even the horses seemed to understand, and lurking danger—the singing of

bullet or the tok-kok, or ping-pong of Mauser—would be recognised by "Keep extended, 34th!" "Gallop!" and on we would rush towards the top, never knowing what was in store for us. Those rides to skylines, shall we ever forget them? The pounding of the hoofs, the swing of the rifle in the bucket, the tugging bandolier, the jostling nosebags, the rush of air and wind in ears and nostrils, the sweet fragrance of crushed wild thyme, the clear sunshine or lowering cloud, the cheery word of encouragement to your blowing horse, disturbed birds or rabbits, and the rest! And to it all a sort of rhythm as we rode—

"What shall we see? What shall we see?  
Only the veldt—or eternity?"

We made about fifteen miles in a south-easterly direction, on a right-hand Harrismith Road. Upon reaching camp Phillips, Wilshin, and I remained in the rear as Cossack post. Wilshin caught a lamb and slaughtered it for extra rations.

January 22.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

Thirty-fourth were left flank guard. We saw half a dozen Boers at a great range and exchanged shots but did no damage. We trekked about south-east for seven or eight miles, and reached Georgina Store by noon. We enjoyed a restful afternoon. We saw great numbers of birds, ducks, koorhaan, crane, &c. The nights had been very cold since the last thunderstorm. Grasses and flowers were luxuriant. Our Convoy, enlarged by the Reits garrison, was immense, and we got a grand view of it from a high ridge we occupied above Georgina.

The Manchester Mounted Infantry captured an old Boer yesterday, who was surprised as he was amusing himself by sniping at the Convoy. He had passes and a bandolier full of soft-nosed Mauser cartridges. General Boyes, I was told, was very wroth with the old rascal. We were now about twenty-five miles from Harrismith.

Corporal Coad, a 36th man, but attached to the Battalion Staff in the 34th lines, died of enteric at 5.30. He was buried at 7 p.m.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### DISHEARTENING DAYS AT ELANDS RIVER

**A** VERY disagreeable incident occurred in the Battalion this morning.

1901.  
January 22.  
Reveille 3 a.m.

Last night two of the 35th men drafted a petition to General Boyes begging for information as to when we might expect to be sent home, and it was urged that many of us were business men and wished, in case of prolonged delay, to make arrangements for our affairs. The paper was signed by all the Companies of the Battalion, only one man of the 34th Company refused to append his name. As previous communications, it was said, addressed through the Colonel, had not been replied to this one was delivered direct to the General's Headquarters. The communication was the cause of some controversy among the officers of the Battalion, but the only reply the men got was a severe reprimand read to us by Adjutant Dixon, by lamp light, before reveille. We were bundled out without ceremony to hear this reproof.

In the framing or presentation of the petition there had not been the slightest intention of disrespect to any one. The men felt that they were entitled to some assurance, one way or the other, for many of them had made sacrifices, and any further delay would have to be arranged for in home affairs. The petition was couched in the most respectful terms.

To a fair and plain question by men who had a right to expect a fair and plain reply this was

the sort of thing vouchsafed to them by way of answer :—

EXTRACT FROM "AFTER ORDERS," 22/1/01.

No. 1. The Officer Commanding 11th Batt. Imp. Yeo. regrets to find that the N.C.O.s and men of the Batt. under his Command have been guilty of a gross piece of unsoldierlike and underhand conduct in sending in a petition to the G.O.C. direct instead of through the C.O.

The G.O.C. has returned the petition to the C.O. with the remark that he attributes the breach of Military etiquette to ignorance; under the circumstances the C.O. has no other alternative than to ignore the circumstance and is obliged to confess that he is ashamed of the conduct of the Batt. under his Command.

By Order

(Signed) W. G. DIXON, Lieut. and Adjt.  
XI. Batt. Imp. Yeo.

A very bitter feeling among the men was aroused by this manner of dealing with their request.

We trekked from Georgina on the Harrismith Road and arrived at Elands River Bridge before noon. We here met General Campbell's Brigade. We camped at the river, and presently a large mail was brought into the lines from General Campbell's Convoy. I received five letters. Fowler and Christy also here returned to the lines. They brought us news that poor Fortescue had died at Winburg of enteric, and that Sergt.-Cook Wood, of the Battalion Staff, had died of dysentery at Harrismith.

Patterson, who was assistant storekeeper under Nicoll at Harrismith, brought a Cape cart full of new clothes.

A day of many important events to us.

I was night guard last night, and at reveille I had to collect the outgoing Company mail, for General Campbell was returning to Harrismith.

Colonel Harley to-day took over the command of our Brigade from General Boyes.

Last night Captain Brune visited 34th lines to say goodbye to some of the men. He woke me in my bivouac, and for a moment I thought him the guard

January 24.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.



calling me, the relief. He said some very pleasant things, and told me that he was going away with General Boyes and that he wished to say goodbye to me.

About eleven o'clock we were called upon to fall in, in line, and the announcement of the death of Her Majesty the Queen was read out to us. The sad news had come through by helio from the Platberg.

General Campbell's Brigade marched back to Harri-smith, and with it went General Boyes and some members of his Staff, Captain Brune and others, and several of our men—McKechnie, Robinson, Bowers, Patterson, &c.

Blount, who was very weak, and had travelled as a convalescent from Reitz, also went with the force to pass on to Mooi River Hospital.

In the afternoon we were visited by a terrible rain, which almost washed our camp away. The tents were flooded; not a trench in the lines was equal to taking off the deluge that rushed down on us.

It was a warm, damp day. The heliograph was twinkling from the corner of Platberg nearly all day. JANUARY 25.

The new clothes opened up were raffled for among the men, for there was not enough to go around. Sergeants Hall and Agnew superintended the drawing. I won a shirt. Of putties and boots there were more than enough. I subsequently managed to get a pair of breeches, and with my new acquisitions, so badly needed, I went down to the river and came up another man. My horse did not recognise me at first!

## CHAPTER XXXV

### ORDERED TO FICKSBURG

01  
January 26.  
sveille 3 a.m.

WE got into touch with the enemy very early. We rode out under Palmer as right advance guard, the 35th taking the left advance. We galloped upon ridge after ridge and got some unpleasantly close volleys, and from the last ridge we cleared out fifty or sixty mounted Boers and almost exhausted our ammunition in firing at them, and we were three miles ahead of camp! About noon we returned to camp and found that Georgina had been passed and that we were on a road to Bethlehem, three miles beyond Georgina Store. I was grazing guard for the afternoon to the usual accompaniment of a thunderstorm. I was night guard, third relief, with Baker first and Meikle second. We had forty-two horses on the line, including officers' mounts and Gun Section horses. A great company truly! So far did Palmer forge ahead to-day that he gave neither pom-pom nor fifteen-pounder a chance.

January 27.  
sveille  
15 a.m.  
inday.

Thirty-fourth was reserve squadron, or gun guard, but at the first heights the advance guard was checked by a Boer fire, and after galloping forward with the pom-pom Palmer kept us ahead, and for the rest of the march we galloped over ridge after ridge. The West Kents did a very lively advance guard with much credit. Once they got into a very hot corner indeed, and Palmer, with Firman's permission, galloped to the right advance to help them. We rode into some very close Mauser fire, and Agnew, Meikle, and Fowler had particularly narrow

escapes. The bullets sang wickedly past our ears, but no one was hit—it seemed miraculous. Fortunately, we were within a few yards of cover, and at our own fire that of the Boers ceased. We made ten miles towards Bethlehem, and we came to camp with very weary horses. Evidently the enemy were numerous in this neighbourhood. No movement in any direction could be made without attracting fire. We were thankful that casualties were escaped.

It can be seen that the days are shortening; light comes later. At 4.45 we started in a very dim light; 84th were left flank guard. The Convoy massed in parallel lines and made quick progress towards Bethlehem. There was no hindrance until we came to the little iron bridge four or five miles south-east of the town. We saw a dozen Boer scouts on a long berg\* to our left, but they were out of range. We heard cannon in the distance all the morning, which was said to be General Campbell in our rear. We got into Bethlehem about midday and camped on the north side of town near the "Kaffir location." I have felt quite ill for the last two days.

January 28.  
Bevalle 3 a.m.

Cowan paid us five shillings each out of the "County Fund." Two-and-sixpence went as a tip for a new pair of breeches I got on January 25th. Pom-pom fire was heard during the morning, and a little later General Campbell's large column and convoy came in. There was an armed grazing guard. My bivouac, which had weathered many storms and much rough usage, required mending. Kennard the painter repaired it for me, making an excellent job by sewing a strong border about it. He also sold me an iron billy. Thompson and James, of the West Kents, invited me out to tea, and they entertained me royally at their bivouac.

January 29.  
Bevalle 5 a.m.

Palmer and Barrington divided by request among the Company much tobacco, chocolate, and other things that

\* This must have been the berg known as Langberg, or Longburg, to which the Boers made after Tweekfontein, December 25, 1901.

came by the mail. There was a sad aspect of this division—much of it belonged to comrades who were no more.

January 30.  
Leveille  
30 a.m.

At eight o'clock a force of a hundred mounted men, a fifteen-pounder, and a pom-pom went out four or five miles on a Reitz road to a farm to get wood for the garrison. We took up positions about the farm on high kopjes, while the Infantry cut wood and piled it on waggons. Some Boers crept in and began sniping, but a few searching shells soon stopped it. The wood-cutting occupied most of the day and we got ravenously hungry, for we had no rations with us. We returned to camp at 6 p.m. At this period I was being rationed for meat with Agnew and Edmondston and another, and during the night a dog stole all four men's rations of mutton.

January 31.  
Leveille 3 a.m.

We started on the road in the direction of Necramo Nek at 4.45. Thirty-fourth with 35th were right flank guard. A few Boers sniped at very long range and 35th replied, but no damage was done on either side. To our left (south) a parallel column could be seen moving, said to be General Campbell seeing us on our way. To our south also we could see Slabbert's Nek. We made twelve miles and got into camp early. There was a slight hailstorm. Veldt flowers, crops, and grass were looking well.

February 1.  
Leveille  
1.15 a.m.

We left camp just before dawn. Thirty-fourth were right advance guard on towards the neighbourhood of Necramo Nek. It was difficult ground, with steep ravines and almost inaccessible ridges. We rode immediately under the south side of the two bergs I mentioned as being in that neighbourhood at our camp of January 13th. We next came in sight of the Senekal Bergs. Witkop was to our left front. In a short while we diverged from the Senekal Road to the left, and leaving Biddulphsberg to the right rear, we camped about four miles north-east of Witkop. Only a few snipers' shots at long range troubled us all day; the nature of the country we scouted was

such that had the Boers attacked we might have had a different time. As it was the march was a long and arduous one. Having for our duty the outer edge of the wheel to the left, our Company had to make at times a great pace. Palmer took us at a terrific gallop to a high point beyond the turning angle, it was an exposed point, one necessary, for the Convoy's safety, to occupy. It was an ideal position for attack. Our Company were straggling out behind, for the horses could not keep the pace. Palmer, Edmondston, and I came to the summit first, and as we arrived a single Mauser shot rang out, comparatively close by, and a bullet whistled. We neither found nor saw any one—there was just the one shot, no more. We concluded that it must have been a signal for some of the enemy on a neighbouring ridge. Our men soon came up, and many remounts were discovered and driven into the Convoy. Later in the afternoon I was grazing guard.

I was night guard last night, third relief. To-day 34th and 35th were rear guard with a gun. We passed under the west side of Witkop, a beautiful landmark with a solid rock summit or roof that is almost a perfect dome. We occupied the foot ridges of this great berg, and from vantage points exchanged shots with the enemy and our guns shelled them. We burnt a farm and a large quantity of forage lying in the fields in heaps. On the heights of a kopje south of Witkop Palmer discovered a cave with a lot of bedding and clothes; most of it we burnt, and while this was being done Wilshin, Hunt, and I were Cossack guard to the left. Two Boers approached, and when they came within range we fired at them, much to their surprise, and they quickly galloped back to cover.

February 2  
Reveille 4 a.m.

We made ten miles to-day and camped among the very rugged uplands some miles to the south-east of Senekal. From camp, over a ridge, in a south-westerly direction, we had a plain view of the top of Wonderkop. The weather was exquisite and, in the afternoon, hot.



A secret order was passed for about seventy I.Y. to be ready at 9 p.m. to make an attack on a neighbouring farm. They returned in an hour or so, having found the farm occupied by an Infantry picket.

February 3.  
Reveille  
3.15 a.m.  
Sunday.

Last night's raid on the farm was rather laughable. Our scouts had run into our picket and only answered in time to prevent an attack. I was again night guard, third relief.

We arose in full moonlight. As we rode out we passed the farm which had been the object of the night's raid. It was evidently a Boer depôt. It was a large farm, and although we did not burn it, it was looted. We got some nice grapes from the wall of the house. We then got up on the great rugged tableland south of Tafelberg and bordering our old Klip Nek scouting-ground east of Hibernia Stores. About noon we came out on Middlesex Kopje and descended into the Hammonia basin south of Klip Nek. We wistfully gazed Klip Nek way at our old, ever-to-be-remembered camp, and we could see poor Grout's grave on the slope. We made a long, hot march across to Hammonia, and there rode into a lot of the enemy, who fired for some time into the advance guard. Only a horse or two were wounded. We camped on one of the old camping-grounds at Hammonia.

February 4.  
Reveille  
3.30 a.m.

Thirty-fourth went out late as rear guard. The road taken by the Column was along by the telegraph line, leaving Willow Grange to the right. There was a great deal of firing—the Boers attacked continually from the high ranges to our left, and it was amazing with the number of bullets that no one was hit. At one point the Boers in hiding let the advance guard pass and opened on the main convoy, throwing it for a while into some confusion, but upon the cannon and pom-pom getting into action they soon cleared. The hits were few and not severe. A Basuto boy rode into our rear under a white flag. He had a note for one of our transport riders, McClosky, from his wife.

As there was promise of heavy rain, Barrington took

five of us forward to put up our Company's tents, which proved a kindly and timely precaution, for a very deluge came down. The Column arrived at Ficksburg about 2 p.m.

All the Basuto boys became excited at the view of their land, just over the Caledon, and they were eager for passes to cross the river.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### WORK AT FICKSBURG

1901.  
February 5.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

A FORCE of mounted men from 34th, 36th, 53rd, and M.M.I. rode as scouts and guards to a gun of the 77th Battery, and a Company of South Stafford Infantry and five mounted orderlies, which were to occupy and garrison Willow Grange. Ten of 34th under Corporal Edmondston rode as left advance scouts. Boers sniped at us from the bergs at Willow Grange, but no one was hit. The post was established and the mounted force rode back to Ficksburg Camp. Christy of 34th was one of the men chosen to be the Willow Grange orderlies.

Restrictive camp orders were read out, relating mostly to passes to town. The camp was a half-mile north of the town, under the great Imperani table mountain.

Twenty men from the Regular Infantry lines were attached to our company to-day, some from the South Staffordshire and some from the Worcesters. They are to learn the mysteries of riding, scouting, and the care of the horse, &c.

February 6.

A reconnaissance, with a gun and a Maxim, was made beyond Mitchell's Mills on the Ladybrand Road. No Boers were seen.

Under Sergeant Burrows, Meikle, Heenan, Fowler, Boughton, and I were made river guard at Caledon Crossing. Only those having military passes were allowed to cross and we had to watch for offenders against the rule. It was a mounted guard of two hours on and four off, for the twenty-four hours. The night

guard was a lonely one, with nothing but the occasional owl hoot and the ripple of the river to break the quiet that prevailed. The town lies on the gentle slope falling from the foot of Imperani to the Caledon River.

The scenery about Ficksburg is rugged and grand, and a few miles over the Basuto border rises the long sierra-like range of the Maluti Mountains with its infinitely varying lights and shadows.

Our river guard was relieved at 8.30 by the West Kents. February 7. At camp we found that a reconnoitring force had gone towards Hammonia *via* Willow Grange. Near Hammonia the force, which had no gun, was checked by a good number of Boers in position on the bergs; some of our horses were killed and our force had to return without accomplishing anything, for rifle fire failed to dislodge the hidden enemy.

The following was the full roll of our Company at this date:—

Lieut. Palmer.	Fowler	Wilshin, T. J.
Lieut. Barrington	Heenan	Wilshin, E. V.
Agnew	Hunt	Weedon, F. J.
Burrows	Kelsey	
Boughton	Lee, T.	
Bradley	Meikle	
Baker	Paparritor	GUN SECTION.
Cowan	Phillips	Hall
Clifford	Ralli	Canny
Corner	Roberts	Campbell
Edwards	Richards	Stephen
Edmondston	Weisberg	Smart

Colonel Firman was O.C. the mounted troops, and Captain Dixon was Adjutant.

Under Colonel Firman an expedition started for Hammonia to fetch a lot of grain—wheat and mealies. February 8. Reveille 3.30 a.m. Thirty-fourth were gun guard, but under Palmer we turned our hand to any scouting required.

We picked up at Willow Grange forty waggons and the Infantry who accompanied the abortive expedition of yesterday, and proceeded along the telegraph line towards

Hammonia. A feint had been made on the main road, probably to induce the enemy to take up positions overlooking it, but we shortly took the right-hand road by the line. We met with no opposition until Hammonia was in sight, when from the big south kopje fire was opened upon us. Our gun and pom-pom instantly opened a rapid fire on a certain position on the great berg, and some twenty Boers on foot were at once seen hurrying out from this nook in the heights. Both kinds of shell in rapid succession were fired amongst them.

Barrington took a party of our Company around for a right flank charge on the Mill, and we covered it before the enemy could prevent us—a few feeble sniping shots being all that met us.

Palmer in the meantime took four men to the top of the berg to see what execution had been done among the enemy. There were abundant and bloody evidences that the Boers had left in a hurry with wounded men. A young Boer, mortally wounded by a shell, was left on the ridge, and a few rifles had been thrown down. In the afternoon I was on Cossack post, south of the Mill, by the gun. The grain was loaded, and in the evening we returned to camp by moonlight, singing. There were some very good voices in our company, notably Clifford's and Robert's.

February 9.  
Bevelille  
5.30 a.m.

It was a quiet day, only the usual guards and fatigues were done.

"Colonial Pay," of 5s. a day, for the I. Y., dating from January 1, 1901, was announced to us as having been confirmed. Our pay for the past year had been at cavalry rates, about one shilling and a penny a day.

I obtained a pass to the town and bought many necessaries in the way of groceries. As it was rumoured that our stay in Ficksburg would be a prolonged one, I invested in some new pots and pans for cooking and washing. I was invited to tea by Weisberg, who had been appointed to the town police. I had a long conversation with Mr. Eals, a Colonial born, grandson of a Waterloo



veteran; he spoke very feelingly of the Colonial view of loyalty and hoped that England would see that it was a true and helpful sentiment to the Empire.

The wounded Boer died to-day; his name was F. H. Fusl.

I was one of the stable line-cleaners.

Orders were read out about "standing camp" health and discipline, and concerning precautions against enteric.

February 10  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

Thompson and James, of the 36th West Kents, came to supper with me at my bivouac. It was a very beautiful evening, and the colours on the mountains were very lovely.

Orders came to prepare for a trek on the morrow. I determined to travel very light, and ordered my boy Jacob to remain in camp in charge of my bivouac and such kit as I should not require.

Available men of 34th, 35th, 36th, and M. M. I., about 200 men, two guns, a pom-pom, one Maxim, and some waggons went out at daylight to Willow Grange, where we picked up some Infantry and more waggons. We then proceeded towards Hammonia by the right road, along by the telegraph line. Thirty-fourth was gun guard and Colonel's escort, Colonel Firman riding with us. The M. M. I. were advance guard. Two miles from Willow Grange they met the enemy on a high ridge. Our guns whisked about and shelled the Boers but we could see nothing of them, for the ground afforded rough and excellent cover. Two of the M. M. I. horses had been wounded. Palmer took us forward to assist, and he sent five of us under Corporal Edmondston up the kopje where the Boers had been, and the M. M. I's. came up just after. We heard a few shots as we rode up, but none of us were hurt, yet in our rear one of the M. M. I. horses was hit. Its rider dismounted, and said that he could not find any outlet for the bullet, it had gone in at the hindquarters. I suggested his off-saddling, which he did, and the bullet was found embedded in the blanket. We then camped,

February 11.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

but with little opposition, at Hammonia, about noon, and more grain, of which there was a large store, was loaded on the waggons by the Basuto Boys, assisted by the Infantry.

We rested under the willows above the Mill for a few hours while this work was being done. At 4 p.m., 34th were ordered to saddle and form a rear screen with a gun to the waggons, to within touch of Willow Grange. We returned to Hammonia, to hear that a night attack might be expected, and that in any case reveille would be at midnight, and that a start towards Klip Nek would be made at one in the morning. I was for night guard, and being on the middle relief I could get no sleep.

February 12.  
Reveille  
Midnight.

At one o'clock in the morning we went out from Hammonia as silently and secretly as we could. Thirty-fourth were made advance guard, and Edmondston, Meikle, Fowler, Richards, Clifford, Phillips, and I were made advance scouts. Palmer, of course, came with us and Barrington was in charge of supports. There were two road scouts and two scouts on either hand, right and left of the road. The moon was about one-third full, and it was cloudy, and over the uneven ground it was difficult to keep in touch. Fowler and I were the two right scouts. The scouts led towards Klip Nek, cautiously and with eyes and ears astrain to catch the slightest sign of the enemy. Behind, we could occasionally hear the click of gun or waggon wheel, or the squeak of a brake, but drivers were dumb. In half an hour we rode upon a cow and calf in a donga, looking very much like a man sleeping by his horse. We laughed and rode on. Soon after I heard a noise of scrambling feet in front of us, the right scouts, and then thirty yards ahead of us, clearly outlined in the semi-darkness, a mounted man. I hastily drew my rifle (we had been ordered not to fire except in dire necessity) and I called in a low voice to the others, "Some one ahead!" Then others became aware of the man's presence. I was riding forward, when Palmer, Edmondston, and Fowler shouted, "Halt! come back!"

An instant later Palmer headed a charge and the man doubled into the darkness of a donga, and although we could hear the clatter of his horse we soon lost all trace of him. So we lost our man. In three minutes it was all over—it was a moment full of excitement; we could not know if we had run against a single scout, an outpost, or a laager. The incident was reported to the Colonel, and he ordered forward six additional advance scouts by way of precaution. We next rode up and surrounded our old friend, the Krogs' house, but only women-folk were there. About four o'clock we had halted on the old familiar camping-ground of Klip Nek, and we waited for the rest of the Column to come up and set Cossack posts about the ridges of the basin. Just as day was breaking the last of the waggons, Infantry, and the rear guard had arrived. At daylight, 35th Company took over the advance guard, and leaving the transport in laager with the Infantry, the mounted men rode on to Hibernia, Ingram's Farm, Store, and Mill. The fifteen-pounder trotted out to a position to cover our advance. We galloped the four or five miles to Hibernia in order to take it by surprise. Thirty-fifth in front kept a right road, we and the Kents a left. As we neared the store we saw two Boers galloping for life beyond it to the uplands towards Doornkop, and a moment after we saw 35th come around from the right at a swinging pace, and surround the garden and house. They could not see the two men making away because of a rise, but they had encircled two more of the enemy, one of whom made desperate efforts to escape and fired several shots from cover of the garden before he surrendered. The other was caught by Crook of the 35th, in bed. They also captured three or four good rifles and some saddled horses.

Mrs. Carmichael was still "holding out" at her cot, and at two or three houses there were women-folk. With three 35th men, Meikle, Baker, and I were north Cossack post. The Mill was hastily destroyed by being blown up,

and it was not long before orders to retire were issued. Kelsey, who had found a hen's nest with a dozen fresh eggs, had asked Mrs. Carmichael to boil them, but so prompt were the orders to retire that he was obliged to leave them behind. We then cantered back to Klip Nek and rested for a few hours in laager and got some much-needed coffee and food. At eleven o'clock we re-saddled, flattering ourselves that we should camp at Hammonia for the night. Thirty-fourth became rear guard, and just as the last cart and Infantry had slipped over the basin's edge two Boer scouts stepped out on the high skyline of the great eastern kopje and gave us a shot or two for luck—but such a range was out of the question, except on a chance shot. On the road to Hammonia a man and his family came into the Column with a waggon load of household furniture and goods. The women said that they greatly desired to get to Ficksburg. As we neared Hammonia a heavy thunderstorm broke over us, and then after a twenty minutes' halt we learnt that we were to continue our march into Ficksburg. We went on in pitiless, pouring rain. Barrington very kindly carried my notes under his mackintosh. We were most of us wet to the skin. The downpour did not cease until we reached the Willow Grange Pass. Here at the spruit crossing the rear guard was delayed half an hour by the break down of an officer's heavily-laden Cape cart. It was not that of an I. Y. officer. It is not out of the way to suggest that luxury-laden carts with bent wheels and "balky" horses are not appropriate pace-makers for a "flying column." Then Paparritor's mount slipped in the mud, and a very nasty tumble resulted; for a moment it was feared he would roll over the edge into the ravine, but luck was on his side, and horse and rider rose with a very severe shaking.

We got into Ficksburg Camp just at dark, having done over fifty miles in the two days. We were tired, wet, hungry, but jolly, every one singing and shouting and trying to enliven the time. Clifford, especially, was in

musical form. When we had got supper and a double issue of rum—we slept!

We were indulged to-day on account of the last two February 13. days' hard work. There were only the usual river and stable guards and the patrols to do.

I heard an Infantry officer relate that a Boer under a white flag had come in yesterday to ask for the body of young Fusl. The messenger, who was stopped by the picket, owned that another Boer had been killed, but he would not say how many had been wounded.

Rather elaborate grazing guards have been instituted. February 14. There is little or no grass within pickets, and our horses and cattle have to go outside the wire entanglements, a mile or two south-west of our old July camp. Each Company has to furnish six guards, three mounted and three on foot. To-day with Bradley and Boughton I was of the mounted guard. There was a concert in town, at which Clifford, Roberts, and Cowan sang. I did not attend. Cowan rendered with much feeling "I Fear no Foe."

Only the usual duties to-day. I wrote some letters. February 15. The mails went out twice a week, through Basutoland.

It was said that several Columns were working south of Ficksburg on Ladybrand Roads.

I was paid two pounds on account, and I managed, at a discount of five shillings, to cash a five-pound post-office order. It seemed to be a tradition that an old soldier was entitled to his "perq." when he could safely exact it.

It was my habit after dark, whenever a piece of candle and reading matter could be obtained, and when I did not feel too fatigued, to creep into my bivouac and spend an hour or two in reading. It was my one amusement, for I did not care for cards nor could I sing. My bivouac was a little tent, two feet high and six feet long, a piece of canvas stretched over two short poles and pegged out, my saddle and blanket kept out draught at the upper end. There was not even room to sit up, but with my



head on my kit valise, a piece of candle stuck on an iron tent hammer for candlestick, I could be perfectly happy, as I lay at full length, with my book or magazine.

At 9.30 in the evening I was so situated when suddenly a stick slashed across my canvas. I always resented that sort of thing, because treating canvas in that way is not calculated to preserve its waterproof qualities, but I paid no attention, thinking it was one of my comrades larking. A few minutes later the slash was repeated, and this time a strange voice said, "Lights out!" I was greatly surprised, and backed out from under the canvas to see to whom I was indebted for this visit. A man was standing by my "hutch" and said peremptorily, "Lights out, I said!" Now there had been no regular "lights out" orders for months, and if on exceptional occasions it had been desirable to keep the camp in darkness it had always been the office of our Regimental Sergeant-Major Peacock to come around, and in a pleasant way to tell us that lights must be extinguished. Here was something new; my light had been the dimmest in the lines, quite at the end of a long hole. Along 34th lines there were three or four tents with lights burning, and all over the camp there were lights. Within ten paces was the Company Sergeant-Major's tent with several candles burning, for he had a card party on. I said quite quietly, "By what authority do you give me this order?" He replied, "What is your name." I said, "the Sergeant-Major will furnish you with it." I thought I should thus find out who he was, but he answered, "Consider yourself under arrest!" He stepped to the open door of the Sergeant-Major's tent where the Sergeant-Major and some of my comrades were playing cards. I instantly put out my light and followed him to see what it all meant. He said to the Sergeant-Major, "What is this man's name?" My name was given him, and he said, "He is under arrest!" No one was disturbed at the card table. The Sergeant-Major said, "What's the matter, Corner?" Some one said within, "That gives us the odd trick."

I said, "Something about 'Lights out,' I suppose, but just look at the lights in the lines, and will you tell me who he is?" "That's the new Provost-Sergeant, Corner, and he's got you down." I turned in, wondering. The card game next door went on until 11.30 that night. The game *was not played in the dark*, but that was a mere detail.

If this man's appointment as Provost-Sergeant had appeared in orders the men knew nothing of it. Orders were rarely read out, only when it was thought necessary to call some especial point to the attention of the men. Battalion orders were copied by the orderly sergeant every night into the Company order-book, but instead of calling upon us to fall in to hear the orders read the orderly sergeant would pass from tent to tent and to each bivouac with the one bit of information that was of keen and vital interest to every member—the hours of reveille and parade.

Soon after nine I was taken up to Colonel Firman by two members of the quarter guard and the new Provost-Sergeant. I was greatly incensed at this shameful indignity and injustice, but I did not nor could not protest. What was there to say? I did not even know with what I should be charged.

February 16.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

When a delinquent comes before his Colonel he is not allowed to wear his belt, hat or helmet, or side arms, or anything that might indicate that he is a soldier, beyond his bare uniform. He is marched between two men with rifles at the shoulder. The Regimental Sergeant-Major, if he knows his business, speaks to him as to a dog. If he has not taken up that position he is sharply told, "Stand at attention!"

Colonel Firman looked up, "What is this man charged with?" The Provost-Sergeant said, "He refused three times to put his lights out when I ordered him last night." It was a deliberate fabrication, but that also was a detail. I had no witnesses. Not even those at the card party had heard anything of the case. Colonel Firman turned

to me and asked what I had to say for myself. I began to explain. I had hardly said three words when my judge interrupted me with a rough, "Oh, I don't want to hear—all that—I'll have you understand that orders are to be obeyed—ten days C.C.!" "Right turn! Quick march!"

I found myself outside the Colonel's tent beside the Provost-Sergeant. I turned on him. I was very angry. We were not two yards from the tent door. I stopped and he halted. I said to him, "Sergeant, when you accuse a soldier before his Colonel you should speak the truth." I was looking at him in the eyes to see if, even by chance, he was under the delusion that he had spoken fairly and justly. His eyes fell, and I said to him, "Yes, you were not speaking the truth, and you seem to know it." He rallied himself at that and cried excitedly, "Come back to the Colonel! Come back to the Colonel!" We stepped inside the tent again. I was too angry to care very much what happened. The Colonel looked surprised and asked what we wanted. The Provost-Sergeant said weakly, "Please, sir, he says I didn't speak the truth." I said, "Yes, sir, because he did *not* tell you the truth." The Colonel said, with more forbearance than I had looked for, "Go away and don't let me hear more of this!"

I walked back to the lines quickly, the Provost-Sergeant following. He was an old soldier, and knew by experience how he was able to trouble me. Trotting after me he told me rapidly that at certain hours for ten days I must report myself to the quarter guard every half hour, that I must confine myself to the Imperial Yeomanry camp, that I should be required for camp-cleaning fatigues morning and evening, that I should not be entitled to passes to the town for three months.

I wished to learn more of this man. I reasoned with myself to approach the matter with a fair mind. To my knowledge I had never seen him before last night. I did not know his name. I thought, "Surely this man has

done something distinguished that he is set to constrain so many men who have served their country zealously and with much sacrifice." Upon inquiry I learnt that he was a sergeant of the ——. I immediately went to their lines and asked many of them, "Who and what is your sergeant that is set to regulate the camp?" The answers I got were not favourable to him. Not a non-com. or a private that I could find would either say a good word for him or defend him. This was the character his own Company gave him. He had been made Provost-Sergeant because he was an old soldier, and because he had curried favour with one of their officers. He was an old marine. He was a "waggon wallah" of the most persistent type. None of his comrades had ever seen him under fire. According to his own confession he had a bad record in the Marines.

Palmer, my officer commanding, had been absent or I should have been sure of a good word with the Colonel.

A wood fatigue, guarded by the Manchester Mounted Infantry and a gun, that went towards Commando Nek, was fired upon by the enemy. One of the Manchester Mounted Infantry fell from a frightened horse and was injured. Our cannon replied.

My poor little pony had fever in his feet; he was very lame, and his hocks were greatly swollen.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### MILL-DESTROYING EXPEDITION

901.  
February 17.  
Beville 5 a.m.  
Sunday.

I DRENCHED my horse twice to-day: he certainly was not worse, yet he was looking ill.

Lieutenant Palmer, who had been in Basutoland for a few days, returned. Agnew was now sergeant of the Section of Worcesters and Staffords attached to our Company. Marriot returned to the firing line to-day.

In the afternoon we were mysteriously given three days' rations "because the Company waggons were required for transport work and they had to be emptied." This was not the true reason, as the men knew very well, and they made some preparations for a trek. At 7 p.m. we got very secret orders to be quietly ready for a march at 10 p.m. This secrecy was maintained because it had come to be believed that there was communication with the enemy by some of the inhabitants of the town. I was ordered to ride the horse, a very good one, belonging to Sergeant Roberts, who was too ill to go out.

It was a very dark night. After a few delays we found ourselves out on the road that passes Zoutkop to Commando Nek, a part of the very route we had taken on the night of July 24th, when we closed in upon Prinsloo. The force, altogether, consisted of about five or six hundred men of the different arms. There were three guns, a pom-pom, and a Maxim. Thirty-fourth under Palmer and Barrington were made advance guard. Palmer chose ten advance scouts, of which I was one, and, extended across the road, we led on in the darkness and silence for hour



after hour. The scouts could only work slowly over such rough ground and in such darkness, not only were there many natural obstacles of ridge, gully, or donga, but barbed wire and old trenches often confronted us. Edmondston, Heenan, Phillips and I were extended to the right of the road, and the strain on the attention was severe. About two miles from Commando Nek we suddenly surrounded a farmhouse. The old owner of the house and his family were at home, but there were no signs of Boers under arms there. On the other hand their dogs set up a furious barking that must have put the enemy on the alert for miles around.

We rode on, very much on the *qui vive*, and we approached the deep and dangerous narrow gorge or pass of Commando Nek. Palmer and Fowler were riding on the road a trifle forward, and abruptly a challenge in English rang out a few feet in advance of Palmer's horse. The challenge was instantly followed by seven or eight rapid Mauser cracks, promptly intermingled with pistol shots by Palmer. It was as if a sparkling fire-cracker had been let off in a large dark room, for the great cliffs of the pass resounded in the silent night air. The Mauser bullets whistled back towards the Column. We hastily turned in towards Palmer and were relieved to find none of us hurt. The Boers, one or two, probably a road picket, scuttled into the pass to give warning. It was past three o'clock and a breeze of morning was beginning to stir.

There was nothing for it but for the scouts to follow. February 18  
It was ticklish work. And any of us may be pardoned if there was an indrawing of the breath as we rode into the dim shadows of the Nek. It was inevitable that we should meet opposition. A few determined men could hold hundreds at bay in such a place. Palmer, always the undaunted, cheerily said, "Come along, boys!" and we began our slow ascent of the rugged, torrent-washed road. We faced the east. The big notch at the top of the pass outlined a bit of sky that was paling for the

dawn. In five or ten minutes, by the time we reached that notch, we should be almost a sure mark. We hurried forward, glancing up at the sinister cover the rocks and cliffs offered the enemy on either hand. Palmer was twenty yards ahead, with Phillips just behind him and as we emerged from the Nek, without warning, it came from right left and front; many Mausers cracked out again and again, some so close that I felt once or twice the wind on my face, whether of bullets or rifle explosions I shall never know; little needles of light darted out around us with their wicked cracks and singing missiles. Palmer shouted something in the din. The horses were like things on springs. I darted forward, thinking Palmer had shouted "Advance!" Phillips checked me with a string of oaths—"Where the — are you going you — fool? Fall back!" He was always my very good friend. We turned in the road and sprang into the shadows of the pass again—there we ran against Barrington and the supports, facing the music. Barrington was standing in his stirrups with his arm raised, chanting, "Steady, 34!" "Steady, 34!" in a way that proved his mettle. The Boers were firing wild and high. Thank God! For all that rattle, only one man was shot in the foot and a horse or two put out. Colonel Firman had acted wisely; he had followed promptly with Infantry and Artillery into the basin of the Nek, and in a few minutes both arms were sweeping the front. It may be that they were merely shooting at the landscape, but the burst of cannons and rifles so close dispersed the enemy, and again the advance guard dashed out, this time into the grey morning light.

We now came out on undulating ground bounded on the left or north by the immense bergs and mountains of the end of the Wittebergen range about Malman's and Franz Hoeks and to the right by the Caledon River with the Maluti mountains far beyond. It is a locality of grandly rugged elements. We scouted on for about two miles under sniping from the high cliffs to the left; our



HON. RUPERT E. S. BARRINGTON.



A. PERCY PALMER, D.S.O.

To face page 284.



Artillery covered our advances and the advances of the extended Infantry and I.Y. Before entering General's Nek, towards Fouriesburg, Palmer set a temporary Cossack post of four men, which was suddenly hotly attacked by the enemy from the heights above. The post extended and retired under fire, all but one man, one of our attached men, named Alsbury, who, not caring to run the gauntlet, tried to find suitable cover on the spot. The enemy were situated so high that all near cover could be shot over by them; Alsbury immediately received a bullet through his right breast. We saw that he was wounded, and Palmer, never hesitating, galloped up to where he lay and, under fire, built a rough sangar or protection about the poor fellow's head. The Boers were shortly pounded out of their position. We halted for breakfast, and Alsbury and another badly wounded Infantryman were brought in on stretchers.

We had heard the guns of some other Column booming over the mountains, on the Hammonia side, from early morning to noon.

After breakfast we continued our march towards Fouriesburg and camped some seven or eight miles south-east of, but within sight of, that town. The rank and file were still quite in ignorance of the object of our expedition.

God truly was merciful to us this day.

It rained heavily during the night and we awoke, having no cover or tents, wet and uncomfortable. The whole day was dark and wet—one mass of threatening, rainy cloud seemed to hang over us and the mountains. We started off in our streaming cloaks on a left road, leaving Fouriesburg on our right. The ridges were bombarded to the front and right. Many Boers were seen in the latter direction. They had miscalculated; they had taken it for granted that we should ride straight into Fouriesburg and had placed themselves on positions commanding a right road. We could see bands of them riding parallel with our line of march, and some of them

February 19.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.



pushed on ahead of us. Thus, at noon an attached Stafford M.I. was shot through the breast as a few men were scouting a mealie field. We pushed on to Steyn's Mill, which we destroyed at one o'clock. This was some miles north of Fouriesburg and forty-two miles from Ficksburg. We then turned south towards Fouriesburg. At our approach some of the enemy made a feeble resistance, but they were pom-pommed out of their ridge and 34th were taken forward, and for the second time in their story they galloped into that town ahead of their Column.

We were allowed to occupy a house on the south side of the town. We had got under shelter at last! We kraaled and fed our tired horses, built big fires and dried some of our things, and attended to our starving inner man by cooking and feasting. There was no Provost-Sergeant to trouble us. It was late before we settled down, rolled in our wrung but still sodden blankets.

February 20.  
Dawn 4 a.m.

Under Major Percival of the Artillery, and Major Goldfinch of the M.M.I., the mounted men, a company of Infantry, and the Artillery with two guns, a pom-pom, and a Maxim, paraded for an expedition to destroy the important Mill \* situated about four miles down the great basin, south-east of town and about halfway to Schoenseg Kopje. Colonel Firman remained in occupation of Fouriesburg with one gun and the balance of the troops.

The 34th was left advance guard. The ground was one that we had been over before, and to most of us the landmarks were the familiar ones of Prinsloo's surrender. Palmer and Barrington led us. Palmer called out four scouts—Ralli, Heenan, George Walker, and Kelsey—but Kelsey's horse having failed him he asked me to take his place, which I did. With these scouts, a black guide, and Palmer's Basuto servant, Palmer made an impetuous dash, far out, over ridge after ridge, over the much swollen spruit where it joined the full river, to a point left of the

\* See July 27th and 30th, 1900.

Mill. He and Heenan were a few yards in advance, and as we galloped up the last ridge we caught sight of a Boer galloping away to the left. We dismounted to fire at him, but Palmer, changing his mind, bade us to remount and try to capture him. At that moment Heenan caught sight of some Boers about thirty yards to our front, hiding in the grass. They at once opened fire, missing Palmer and the rest of us, but hitting Heenan, who was standing on the ridge and nearest to the enemy, through the arm and through his hat. Palmer and I had already mounted, he had had his attention on the fleeing Boer, but I hastily shouted that the enemy was close by. "Come back!" "Come back," I shouted. A Boer shot at him from his flank at ten yards and again missed him. He at once took in the new situation and dropping—it was only a few yards—under the skyline to which we had ascended, we all took cover behind a little ledge of rock, within a hundred yards of where Heenan had been wounded. Palmer, Ralli, and George Walker crept to the edge of cover to fire, and bullets hissed over us and splashed among the rocks about us from two directions. I attended to Heenan, who was bleeding very badly from an ugly wound in the biceps of the right arm. I knew little of the bad symptoms of wounds, but I found filaments stringing from the orifice, which I took to be arteries, and as the bleeding was profuse I hastily folded a clean pocket-handkerchief he fortunately possessed and padded the wound with it and then bound the arm about very tightly with my putty. He bore this dressing without flinching, although it must have given him great pain.\* In a short while he said to me suggestively that the pain was pretty bad and the bandage very tight. I told him that I knew it was very tight, but that I had purposely made it so, and that I believed it to be necessary. He

\* It is curious what freaks memory plays at such times. I remember a line of Tennyson's "Revenge" at this moment got up on its hind legs, so to speak, and made a diabolical grimace at me. It runs, "But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly dead."

smiled very cheerfully, and said he knew I had done what I thought best. The ledge under which we lay was about a hundred yards from the river bank, and the Kaffir guide crept down very warily, taking such cover as was afforded, and got a billy of water for Heenan from the river. A little black dog had followed us out of Fouriesburg, and whilst I had been attending to Heenan had curled himself up at my feet. A fit of curiosity now seized him, and trotting up over the little ledge there was a Mauser crack and doggie was no more; he had been shot through the head. Barrington with the supports had reached the ridge on the Fouriesburg side of the spruit, right at the junction of the spruit and river; they were in a bee-line, almost within shouting distance, but to get to them would mean a half a mile scramble up the river bed and to wade the spruit breast high. Palmer now sent his servant "Mealies" (the boy who had ridden in under a white flag on McClosky's account on February 8th) with a message to Barrington to let him know that we were in a tight corner. Palmer saw that if the Boers crept around to our right we should be cut off. The Column in our rear was having great difficulty in advancing on account of the bad state of roads and spruits, and the guns were still far behind. To have ridden away on our horses would have meant that we should all have been killed—there was only cover enough for a foot retreat, and at places there was none at all. I could see that it was a point of honour with our Lieutenant to get us safely out of the scrape into which we had fallen. He asked Heenan if he felt equal to the journey to the supports, to which Heenan cheerfully said, "Of course." They started off at a run to the river. Palmer asked, "Should they swim it?" They would have been drowned had they tried it, for the river was swift as well as deep. It was the shorter cut to protection, but an impossible one. Up the winding of the river they went, and although they came half a dozen times under fire they safely reached the supports, and Palmer hastily returned to us. He had thought out

a plan, he was very eager. "Off-saddle, boys, quick!" he ordered.

At reveille I did not know if we were to return to Fouriesburg or not, and I had not dared to leave anything behind on that chance. I had my sodden overcoat and blankets rolled on my saddle. I had found it work well, as a general rule, never to leave my things behind, as one never knew what order or duty would prevent one's returning. This was the exception. Palmer now would not hear of my leaving anything behind, although I assured him that it was beyond me to carry everything so far. The horses were to be left, linked together, on the chance that by and by these positions would be taken and the mounts recovered. With rifle, saddle, wet cloak and blanket, bandolier and nosebag, I had quite sixty pounds' weight to carry, all in loose shape. I slung my saddle across my rifle barrel and carried it hanging against my legs in front of me. We made the deep bank of the river before the enemy became aware of our movement; this was very fortunate, for it was one of the most exposed points. The supports were keeping up a lively fire, trying their best to cover us. The Boers soon found out that we were creeping down the river, and at every break in the bank, formed by little water ways, the bullets would whistle about our ears. Never did anything feel so heavy to me as my load in that terrible journey. I begged Palmer to let me leave some of the things, for I was the last man, and I was keeping him behind, for he would not leave me. He refused with extraordinary spirit; he would save everything, and the horses too, by and by! At the half journey he took my saddle for a while and gave me Heenan's rifle to carry instead. Ralli, Walker, and the guide, more lightly freighted, had made better progress, and had already reached the spruit, but had not crossed it. Palmer and I struggled on, at times falling down flat, utterly winded. How kind he was! 'twas worth going through this to learn that a man could be so mindful of others at such a time. "Buck up, old

chap! We'll soon get there!" As soon as we had recovered enough we made another rush, and another, until we were all together on the spruit bank with our supports within thirty yards of us. And those last few yards were the worst ones. Here the Kaffir did us capital service. He knew the spruit and the character of the current and bottom; he stepped down into the stream and with Ralli's help carried across in two or three journeys the saddlery and rifles. Some of the things we threw over. This place was a big gap in the river wall, and the Boers were keeping up a steady flight of bullets where they knew we had to cross. They were splashing and hissing in this junction of the waters. We stepped down into the stream in single file, and my first sensation was that I was glad the water was warm, but bullets began to buzz and to sizzle and gave us something more interesting than temperatures to think about. Walker and I were in mid-stream together. Palmer, behind, asked Walker to take a bridle that had not been thrown across. Walker took it and handed it forward to me, and at the same instant said, without much excitement, "I'm hit, but it's nothing! it's nothing! go on, go on, get out of it!" We scrambled through and up to our comrades. He was shot through the fore-arm, a neat puncture in the flesh. I was now utterly exhausted, and for some moments found difficulty in recovering my breath. In coming through the spruit Palmer had his shoulder-strap cut off by a bullet, the puncture being exactly at the seam at the corner of the shoulder.

Here we left the saddlery and kit, and, under a misapprehension, two or three rifles. When we retired it was with the understanding that we were to return in a few minutes as reinforcements came up. We made our way down the bank of the river and joined the 35th Company, which was under the command of Kingwood. They were under a ridge on the Fouriesburg side of the Mill. The Boers were on the heights of a conical kopje



overlooking the Mill, at long range, and from this, at intervals, we were fired upon. Palmer got a horse from one of his troop and ordered all dismounted men and the wounded to return to Fouriesburg at once. On parting he said he would bring back everything. Heenan and Walker were given horses, so that there were six of us to go into Fouriesburg. I walked in by the side of Walker, who again assured me that his wound was a trifle, though the bullet had gone through his arm. We walked through the advancing troops and Artillery, and made our way in the course of an hour or so into Fouriesburg. I went with Walker to the doctor to see his wound dressed. Dr. House said that both Heenan's and Walker's wounds were "nice clean flesh wounds" that would not give them a great deal of trouble.

In the light of what subsequently took place we were much puzzled as to why we were not molested on our way back, for from the heights, on the return of the troops, a heavy fire was maintained by the enemy till within a quarter of a mile of the town.

After we had left the field the mounted men and Infantry occupied the ridges near the Mill, but as the Artillery could not safely advance over a difficult drift, it was decided to destroy the Mill by shelling, rather than risk the chance of ambush for the troops from beyond. Twenty-five shells were fired into the building, completely destroying it. When this was related to me I was quite sure that the Mill itself had not been destroyed, but only the store room, and perhaps the miller's residence. I remembered noticing, when I was there in July, that the Mill itself lay down quite out of sight in the deep hollow near the drift. It was afterwards known that the Mill was soon being worked again by the Boers.

In retiring, after this work was done, the little force had a warm two hours. They were fired at from every 'vantage point the great cliffs afforded. A Sergeant of the 53rd East Kents was shot through the wrist and liver. An Artilleryman was shot through the leg, and our cheery

friend, the Corporal Range-finder of the 79th, got a bad wound in the arm. E. V. Wilshin of ours had a bullet neatly put through his tunic pocket—a glazed paper or envelope had saved him from being badly wounded—Agnew's horse was wounded, and, besides, many similar escapes were related.

Those of us who had been caught out on the ridge learnt that our comrades had fully realised our perilous position. Not only our supports under Barrington had kept up a constant fire, but the left scouts had obtained a good position to check the ardour of the Boers about us; these were Phillips, Meikle, and Baker under Edmondston.

Palmer and his men brought back all our horses, kit and saddlery, and the rifles, but the latter in the hurry that followed were brought to the wrong lines. I immediately reported the loss, and was exonerated by my officers, and another rifle was given me, but it was not my own which I had carried so long, and this, as a soldier, was a real grief to me.

When the force had all returned we were given an hour in which to get a rest and something to eat. There was one good reason why the force should get back to Ficksburg as soon as possible—the Artillery and pom-pom ammunition had become almost exhausted. We marched promptly, and went down and through the beautiful gorge called Bester's Vlei, where one of the De la Harpe brothers' farms is situated, with its large ponds and its willows and its reedy growth. As we marched through this cañon the setting sun shone in our faces and lighted up the water and rocks with quite a Turner-esque effect. Thirty-fourth occupied the tremendous berg to the right, and had a terrible climb to the summit, but the enemy was nowhere. It was said that they had gone on to occupy Commando Nek, under the impression that we should return by that route, but we now saw that we were to step over the border into Basutoland and follow the Caledon down to Ficksburg. Long after sunset we

came to the Brindisi Crossing, and camped under a glorious starlit sky hard by the Middleton Mills.

Orders were issued to make a start at 5.30, and the I.Y. saddled and went out to occupy the ridges in rear, in order to cover the Column's progress over the drift. We stayed out an hour or two, when word was brought us that the river was much too high to cross in safety. The men were very pleased over it, for there were fine orchards here, with tons of ripe peaches and other fruit, and chicken to be bought, and we had bought bread at Fouriesburg. We had not lived in clover for the past few days, and a rest was welcomed.

February 21.  
Bevelling  
4.30 a.m.

The Boers soon discovered our plans, and they came down from Bester's Vlei and fired at our butchers at work and the horses at water, and gave them a lively five minutes, but no damage was done. Word was helio'd to Ficksburg to say that we were delayed.

I was grazing guard all the afternoon. The Boers sniped a short while and the Artillery replied. In the night 34th furnished a mounted picket.

In the evening Heenan, Walker, and I had a little reunion over hot coffee, and talked over our yesterday's experience.

Marching orders at five. Thirty-fourth and 35th again occupied the ridges to the east, and other mounted men stood at the west side. The Boers sniped at intervals and our men replied. A 35th Cossack post under Crook had a particularly warm time, but casualties were confined to the horses. The passing of the drift by the Column was a long operation. It was after eleven o'clock when 34th and 35th retired and crossed over. The water was saddle high, the drift not an easy one, and the steep approaches slippery, and several horses fell. Hundreds of natives lined the road, and greeted us with childlike exclamations. For a while our ways had fallen in a land where "all the paths were peace."

February 22.  
Bevelling 4 a.m.

The fields were rich and shoulder high with ripening crops of mealies, millet, and other grain. Without

anticipation a sense of quiet and security fell upon us, and a clearer interpretation of the metaphor, "the mantle of Peace," was made known to us. It was a contrast, an object-lesson that for the moment would not be denied to the intelligence.

We marched in columns of four—no guards and scouting to do, a complete break in our routine. We marched in and out tortuous defiles, under great cliffs, and within sight of mountain ranges. About one o'clock we met Chief Jonathan, attended by a Resident Magistrate. Our C.O. gave him welcome. A midday halt was called. The Chief was a heavy-set, burly man, neatly dressed in a dark blue uniform with a little braid, a khaki helmet, and leggings. He was desirous of inspecting the guns of the Artillery, and the pom-pom particularly took his fancy. He must fire it himself. It was turned towards a perpendicular cliff a mile or more away, and after a little instruction he fired a shot at a great dark spot on the face of the cliff. The gun kicked under his hand more than he had expected, but that made him all the more anxious to try again upon further instruction. When his shells broke a few slabs from the cliff he was much delighted and impressed. We arrived at Thlotse, one of the principal Basuto towns, at 5 p.m. and camped. I was night guard.

February 23.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.

We rode out of Thlotse at 5.30. The whole native population seemed to line the road, much as if they had been children and we a circus procession. Their greetings, a lifting of the hand and arm and an exclamation, "Aie!" was simple and pleasant. They offered for sale fruit, eggs, and native arms, the assegai and axes. Not far from the town we forded another large stream. The O.R.C. territory was always on our right, just over the Caledon. At Thlotse a ration Convoy had met us, for the Column had become very short of everything. We passed through many native settlements and kraals, and by a few farms. We got to the native settlement opposite Ficksburg at noon. We found the Caledon

very high—to the neck of most of our horses. We got across very slowly and just short of swimming. There was no news, no mail, and little to do but settle down at the old camp.

The Provost-Sergeant was vindictive. He came to me in the middle of my tea and ordered me for a camp-cleaning fatigue. He seemed regretful that I had been enabled to spend a week of my ten days' "C.C." outside of his sphere—in the firing-line.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### MORE WORK AT FICKSBURG

1901.  
February 24.  
Reveille 5 a.m.  
Sunday.

A QUIET day. Guards and regular duties. A telegram was read to us to the effect that we should soon be relieved, that the new drafts were on the way; that the constitution of the Companies and Battalions would remain the same, that those who wished to do so might remain.

February 25.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

Usual duties. My boy Jacob longed for Basutoland, and he decided to leave me "for a month." He brought me a new boy to take his place. Jacob had served me very faithfully, and I was sorry to lose him. He told me that he did not have an easy time during my absence.

My punishment ended at sunset to-day. Up to the stroke the Provost-Sergeant pursued me, I had reason to think with the hope that I might give him some excuse for obtaining a renewal of my punishment.

February 26.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

I did some writing for Palmer. I got the necessary pass for Jacob to go over the Caledon.

The sad news reached us of poor young Blount's death, at Mooi River Hospital, of enteric. We had bid him goodbye at Eland's River Bridge on January 24th.

I was sent on duty to the town. At Mitchell's Stores, in an inner store-room, I ran against a coffin. I said to the attendant, "I didn't know you sold coffins." He said, "That is for poor Mosely." I said, "Who is Mosely?" He replied, "He was an Englishman who was shot by the Boers, who said that he had furnished

information to the British. It was certain that he himself had not done so; what his brother, who fled, may have divulged is another matter. It was hard that a man should be shot for what his brother may have done." He then told me further that Mosely had been taken early one morning from the Ficksburg gaol by a band of Boers to the outskirts of the town and shot down without any warning whatever, that he was buried by the wayside. When an opportunity offered it was the intention of the English residents to re-inter the body in the cemetery.

The men now remaining of the firing-line of the Company assembled under Palmer and Barrington by the park fence to have their photograph taken. Twenty-three men and our two officers attended. Three men were absent, Burrows and Phillips, who were too ill to come, and Nigel Walker, who was absent. The frontispiece of this volume is taken from this photograph.

The usual camp duties, for the rest a quiet day.

February 27.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

There was a funeral in the afternoon of a Stafford Infantryman. We could hear the music of the march in camp.

To-day was the anniversary of our embarkation at Liverpool for South Africa.

February 28.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

A hot, cloudy, disagreeable day. The flies are so numerous as to constitute a plague. Of one thing I am assured—they are a means of spreading disease. From the latrines, where they swarm, to our tents, where they shelter themselves in thousands, is a short journey. They infest our rations of meat and jam, and fall in our dixies of coffee and tea. The connection and conclusion are inevitable.

I climbed the Imperani Berg or Mountain at the back of our camp. In the higher nooks and levels I found many pretty ferns and other interesting forms of vegetation. At the foot of the berg and near our camp is a pretty plantation of various species of fir-trees, willows, gums, poplars, and wattles.

## 408 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

March 1.  
Leveille 4 a.m.

The night was a very wet and stormy one. There was an order for all mounted men to parade at five o'clock, and we were all ready at that hour, when it was countermanded by one of "no parade." This was due probably to the very threatening state of the weather.

A year ago to-day we sailed down the Mersey. How much has happened since then! How many comrades laid away!

I cleaned the lines with Boughton this morning.

March 2.  
Leveille  
30 a.m.

I was warned for quarter guard last night, and this morning at 10 a.m. mounted guard with two others, under a corporal of the 53rd. It was a twenty-four hour guard, two on, four off. The sentry on duty had to march up and down before the guard tent with bayonet fixed—to "look after all Government property within sight," to turn out the guard for the Colonel, to salute passing officers, and to challenge every one entering camp after "lights out," and to look after any prisoners in the guard tent.

There was a "round up" in force to-day. Thirty-fourth and 35th with a gun went out on the south road to Mitchell's Mill, and the Kents and M.M.I. with a gun and pom-pom went north towards Willow Grange, and both parties scouting in the westerly direction around Imperani, met, having picked up cattle and sheep by the way, and all returned on the south road. They only encountered the enemy at long ranges. Being on guard I did not go out.

March 3.  
Leveille  
1.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

New guard relieved ours at 10 a.m. The Provost-Sergeant put a man in the guard tent last night for drunkenness; he certainly was not drunk, as all bore witness. Four of the 36th West Kents were given two days C.C. for calling, "Stand by your kits!" when the Provost-Sergeant was observed in their lines. The man was not liked.

The flies are a terrible pest. The nights are getting colder, and at sunset the flies take refuge in the tents and bivouac tops.







There were some races on the veldt, at the north-east of town. I wrote letters for home. An off day. We were paid our first "Colonial Pay" to-day.

March 4.  
Beville  
5.30 a.m.

The 53rd Company removed to garrison the Mitchell's Mill pass. They took seven days' rations. The M.M.I. were sent to Ladybrand. This cut our camp down one-half. A heavy mail came up; I got eleven letters.

March 5.  
Beville  
5.30 a.m.

Again 34th is bereaved. To-day we got the sad news of the deaths at Winburg of Blyth and J. Howard, the younger McIlwraith, of enteric. Both brothers McIlwraith!

News also came of several Commissions. Agnew for one, Hall of the Gun Section for another, Crook also of the 35th, and others.

The Battalion was reorganised, so that the 53rd and 62nd Companies were admitted to the 11th Battalion I.Y.

We received orders to move camp at half-past ten, and we pitched east of town, quite close to the Caledon Crossing. It rained heavily almost the whole time of our transit, so that everything became wet and disagreeable. At noon a general fatigue was ordered, and we marched back to the old camp and raked it and scraped it and picked up all rubbish and dirt and *bric-à-brac* that cumbered the ground and filled in all refuse pits and latrines—about three hours' hard work.

March 6.  
Beville  
5.30 a.m.

Late orders come for us to be prepared to move early in the morning.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### TO WARRINGHAM'S STORE THROUGH BASUTOLAND

1901.  
March 7.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

AT break of day the waggons passed over the drift into Basutoland and took a south-west road. Thirty-fourth, 35th, 36th, with a pom-pom and Maxim, under Colonels Harley and Firman, followed. We marched twelve or fourteen miles and halted for midday, but weather prevented further progress and camp was pitched. The natives offered to us, for sale, the usual assegais and other arms, and we were in a fair way of dying the death of King John, of a surfeit of peaches—the yellow peach, common to the country.

George Walker returned to the lines. He said he was tired of hospital, but his arm was still too stiff to allow him to carry a rifle.

March 8.  
Reveille  
.30 a.m.

We moved off from camp about 5.30. It rained in torrents. At 9 a.m. we reached a river that proved to be too high to cross. We put up the tents and the rain ceased. A Battalion fatigue party was ordered and marched to the drift with spades and shovels. We widened and levelled the drift road to the water's edge. Colonel Harley and Staff came down and made an examination and gave instructions to Lieutenant Hall. Orders which were issued for marching were countermanded on account of the rain recommencing in a torrent.

A Basuto warrior came into the lines and gave us an exhibition war dance. He stalked and killed many imaginary foes. It was quite interesting, for the man was no mere actor but took himself dreadfully in earnest,

and he was of fine physique. There was a half ration of rum issued. I was on night guard; my relief fell from 1.30 to 4.30 a.m.

We stood to our horses for an hour or two in the morning until word came from the drift that the transport had managed to cross. The water was high, and it was a swift and dangerous ford. The mounted men rode on straight across country to Teyatenening, a small Basuto town. At the Post Office was a telegram saying that a rumour gave it that Botha and 4,000 Boers had surrendered. We suspected it might be about as true as many others that we had seen for the past month or so. We halted here for three hours at midday and several large sacks of peaches were sent down to the lines for the troops. I could not learn the name of the generous donor. It was said that it was a gift from the Commissioner to Colonel Harley, but the truth could not be learned. It was a present of a very welcome kind. We marched six miles further along by the Caledon banks and camped by a kraal on good flat ground by a high kopje. The waggons were very late in arriving, and it was nearly ten o'clock before we had had tea and pitched our tents and bivouacs.

March 9.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.

At daylight we started on the Ladybrand or Maseru Road. Agnew was very ill of dysentery and rode in a hospital ambulance. We made good progress for eight miles, when for the sake of the transport stock we halted for a few hours—10 a.m. to 3 p.m. On the right over the Caledon in the distance we caught sight of Ladybrand at the foot of a great berg or range. The Basuto habits, dwellings, greetings, kraals, crops and fields were all very interesting to us. Large tracts of millet or "kaffir corn" are now ripening, and give the country an air of fertility and prosperity that is delightful after witnessing so much of the devastation of warfare.

March 10.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

We continued our march to within two miles of Maseru, then the skies broke upon us again. Everything I had was sodden and I was starving. I got permission

to enter Maseru, and with Kelsey and a few others got a good square meal at Sterley's Boarding House. At his shop I bought dry blankets for the night, and with other purchases packed them in a sack to keep them dry until we should reach camp. The night was so dark that no road was visible and we had to return to Sterley's to beg a lantern. Some of the returning party elected to go on in darkness and they wandered around, lost, the whole night. Sterley had no lantern, but he lent us an old colander and in that we stuck a candle, and in an hour we had reached the lines. I was wet to the skin, but I stripped, rolled myself in my new dry blankets, with my wet ones over them, and was soon hot and asleep.

March 11.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

We marched through Maseru town to the Caledon Drift a mile and a half beyond. A ferry boat with cable attachments was plying there. The river was very high and swift. It took some hours to get the transport over the ferry, and most of the men got permission to ride back to town to get a good breakfast at Sterley's. I bought a cheap watch for night guard time-keeping, and an overcoat.

Then we returned to the drift for an hour. Two English settlers, Messrs. Charles Dickens and J. Millar, brought us a handsome present of fruit and lunch. At half-past one 34th was ordered to cross over to relieve the picket on the kopje above the drift. Here, on the kopje top, we found a few sheep, and Marriott and Hunt soon had for us extra rations of good, fresh mutton. Our whole force had crossed only by dark, and camp was pitched opposite Maseru on the west side of Caledon. It was a wet and dreary night. Agnew, Heenan, and Fowler were left at Maseru in hospital.

March 12  
Reveille  
3.30 a.m.

We rose in a slow, persistent drizzle which gradually increased to a steady rain which lasted all day. This day's was about the worst experience of such weather we had on the campaign. What it would have been to me without my new cloak I can only imagine, but nothing really kept out the incessant soak. The horses sloshed

along in muddy water, often to their knees. The wet trickled down one's back and into one's boots, and so we splashed, splashed for hours on our march towards Commissie Poort. We arrived there far ahead of the waggons, which were in sad trouble that day. We had to stand by our horses, on a hillside, in the cold wind-driven rain, for a couple of hours, waiting for them; the oxen of those arriving were sent back to help the less fortunate. Thirty-fourth had to furnish a night picket, wet as we were. I was on night stable guard. Tell it not in Gath! In the middle of the night two ministering angels with stars on their — (not their foreheads where angels are said usually to wear them) came around with bottles of whiskey, and said, "Drink hearty; it is a good prescription, and you need it now if you ever did. This is against regulations. Say nought!" And we put it to these angels straight — "Was it not, also, against Heaven's regulations to rain as it did this day?"

There was a rifle inspection—a very timely one. We were allowed to dry our sodden kit until eleven o'clock. The rain had ceased, but until ten o'clock there was a curious damp haze over all the land. Palmer and Barrington again divided among the men a quantity of chocolate and tobacco that had come through the mail.

We trekked at one o'clock sharp. Thirty-fourth was left advance guard. The ground was so boggy in places that we had to make detours. We were now following the line of pickets that ran from Bloemfontein through Thaba N'chu to the Caledon. They were little bands of Infantry placed on kopje tops, every half mile or so; they had constructed sangars, trenches, entanglements, and shelters for themselves. We felt that it must be a lonely life. After a march of about five miles we arrived at Warringham's Store, which is on the Leeuw River at the foot of the little mountain of Thaba Patschoa on the Thaba N'chu Road. We camped near the M.M.I. and others who had preceded us from Ficksburg. The store had a supply of groceries.

March 12.  
Revetille  
5.30 a.m.



March 14.  
Beville  
5.30 a.m.

We moved the site of camp to a point a hundred yards south. Thirty-fifth Company was ordered to a post near Thaba N'chu. We learnt that 34th would remain here for picket and outpost duty.

I was grazing guard for six hours, eleven to five, and at the close was warned for picket duty.

March 15.  
Beville  
5.30 a.m.

Under Corporal Ralli two of us were on fatigue to dig extra camp latrines. A screen had to be made, and we sewed the pieces of sacking together, which work occupied us all the morning.

Two Boers endeavouring to cross the picket line last night were wounded and captured.

Available men were so few in 34th lines that the duties on them were very arduous at this period.

The neighbourhood seemed to be subject to sudden and curious rainstorms.

March 16.  
Beville  
5.30 a.m.

Dr. House, accompanied by ten men (seven of our attached men and Lee, Baker, and Marriott), rode into Thaba N'chu to obtain medical supplies for the Battalion.

In the morning I was line cleaner with Boughton and Kelsey.

Three Driscoll's Scouts had joined us, from Basutoland, at Ficksburg, just as we started on our journey here. One was a German named Sartorius, one an American named Long from Detroit, the other was Boughton, an Englishman. Sartorius was a Sergeant-Major in his Company. They had been captured by Boers near Winburg, and put over the Basutoland border. In the little fight at the farm, when they had been surrounded, a fourth man named Welt, one of Roosevelt's Rough Riders, and who had fought at Talana Hill, was badly wounded.

A wood fatigue under Edmondston went out in the morning.

I was one of the night picket.

March 17.  
Sunday.

Our picket guard ended at 5.30 a.m. It was a very wet night, with thunder and lightning. The whole day remained squally and stormy.

Palmer left us to-day, much to our sorrow. He and all of us were much affected when he said goodbye. He had led us gallantly. He had been given a commission in the police, and he went to Thaba N'chu to his new duty.

The ten men had not returned, which made our camp duties heavy. I was on the twenty-four hour outpost on the north hill, 5.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

The three Driscoll Scouts left us for Thaba N'chu.

George Walker and Meikle, both suffering from rheumatism, went into hospital.

The troops were ordered to stand by their arms and their saddled horses from reveille until nearly nine o'clock, and the southern pickets were all doubled, as it was anticipated that a rush would be made on our line by Boers in the front of some drive that appeared to be in progress.

March 18.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Our picket guard consisted of Edmondston, Roberts, Kelsey, Boughton, Nigel Walker, Bradley, the two Wilshins, myself, and five attached men. We had little to do except our respective watches. We had two entrenched posts, 200 yards apart, to guard and patrol, two sentries to each post. Kelsey and I were on the eastern post. We were relieved at 6 p.m. by a similar picket from the 36th West Kent Company.

With three others I was line cleaner.

March 19.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Some of the officers played single-wicket cricket below the camp. Others practised assegai throwing, quite a fascinating amusement. Barrington's record of forty-six paces could not be broken, except by the native throwers.

A Convoy came through to-day, and a Company of Mounted Infantry came in.

A mail came in from Bloemfontein. Roberts and some of our men took five surrendered Boers and prisoners on to the post of the 35th Company. They returned at 1 p.m., and at that moment a terrific storm of wind and rain swept down from Thaba Patschoa and almost washed

March 20.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

out the tents. This storm lasted for two hours, and the camp at the finish was simply a bog. I had some trouble with my bivouac because the ground became so soft that it would not hold pegs. Those in tents were even worse off.

Two brigades were camped in the neighbourhood all day—one, it was said, under General Bruce Hamilton, and the other under Colonel Hickman. It was rumoured that most of the Boers had “broken back.”

March 21.  
Bevella  
5.30 a.m.

All the mounted troops again were ordered to saddle, with cloaks, and stand by. At 7.15 we were ordered to off-saddle.

The two Brigades or Divisions went on their way. We did not know their destination.

The following order, which came by mail, relating to the sending home of the Imperial Yeomanry, was read out to us :—

IMPERIAL YEOMANRY.

12/3/01.

Strong drafts are arriving from England. As the drafts reach the Squadrons urgent cases will be allowed to go home. When the Squadrons are reported efficient, all the original contingent who wish to do so will be allowed to go. In this way the old contingent will probably all be on their way to England before the end of May.

By Order

(Signed) W. KNIGHT, Major,

S.O. I.Y.

Johannesburg.

Geo. A. Walker went to Bloemfontein Hospital on account of sciatica.

On account of Hickman's Column having camped on the north side, the regular picket was not posted. After the Column's departure Edmondston took three of us there to conclude the day's guard. It rained very heavily in the afternoon, and one of the attached men got toothache so violently that one of us did his guard.

The roll-call at this date was as follows:—

Lieutenant Barrington, Commanding	Hicks	Wilshin, T. J.
Burrows	Kelsey	Wilshin, E. V.
Bradley	Lee, T.	Weisberg
Boughton	Meikle	
Baker	Marriott	
Cowan	Paparritor	GUN SECTION.
Corner	Ralli	Lieutenant Hall
Edmonston	Roberts	Campbell
Edwards	Richards	Canny
Hunt	Weedon	Stephen
	Walker, N.	Smart

Of these there were only nine privates subject to the usual guards and fatigues.

The rain that had caught us on guard did not stop until far into the night. We had returned after sunset to find that camp had been removed to higher and stonier ground. On the site of the old camp the only object to be seen was my little bivouac in a sloppy waste of water—almost a lake. I was thankful my comrades had left it standing, for what would have happened to my blankets and things in that deluge, Heaven only knows. I and my Kaffir boy went down to find it occupied by thousands of flies and several field rats that had made it a sort of ark. A little banked-up trench saved my "hutch" floor from being under water. I drove out the intruders and arranged for my lonely bivouac for the night, for in a few minutes it was dark. My faithful Kaffir came, after a while, subdued, wide-eyed and mysterious, and called, "Suh! come, coffee!" I followed him to a knoll of the higher ground, where he had a little fire kindled under an old umbrella, and on it was a small billy of simmering coffee. Of what quality the coffee really was I cannot say, but that night it tasted to me like nectar. I vowed to myself to reward the lad's patience. He had a little sack of fairly dry ox chips hidden in an old biscuit tin. I felt like a lake dweller of primeval days as I turned in and slept after the day's miseries. In the morning a facetious comrade asked me if I thought myself "a blooming water-lily." Very early I took my sodden

March 22.

blankets and kit up to camp; everybody was miserable and late. Coffee was not "up" until 9.15, for there was no dry fuel—it was vile, luke-warm stuff that had never been boiled. I felt that I must hustle for something, if only to keep body and soul together. The morning was misty and chilly. I went to one of Pilcher's Column, which had arrived, and bought, for half a sovereign, a piece of bacon, and under many difficulties I got a breakfast that revived me. The weather cleared, and all the day we were allowed to expose our kits, and after the manner of soldiers we were soon joyous and forgetful.

March 23.

Within the past few days no less than seven Brigades had come in touch with us, or camped in the neighbourhood. We had seen pass Pilcher's, Thorneycroft's, Bruce Hamilton's, White's, and Hickman's.

With the equinox now passed we tried to hope that the back of the bad weather was broken, and that it would be more settled. There are now heavy night dews when there is no rain, which I suspect to be the harbinger of our old acquaintance, the regular frosts.

We witnessed just before sunset, when the sun emerged from a clouded sky, a curious tide in the affairs of the white ants which interested us very much. There were no anthills within sight, but we had noticed many of the slow, persistent creatures, the builders, groping in their blind way about a small tunnel they had apparently just completed to the surface of the ground. As if upon a signal there emerged, one by one, what seemed an endless chain of large, dark brown or grey ants, with long, easily detachable wings. Most of them, hesitating for a moment, spread their wings and flew off in a blind, instinctive way, and were lost to sight. Some foundered and crawled away. These ants measured, from tip of wing to tip of wing, at least two inches, and they rushed out of the little tunnel in many hundreds, but always one by one. The white ants seemed to be merely disinterested spectators. The only explanation I could give was that it was the departure of queens to found new colonies or hills.



Twelve of us, under Corporal Roberts, then went out to relieve the north picket. I was for third relief with Boughton. On the second relief two of the attached men fired two shots, and the guard hastily turned out to find that what the men had taken for one of the enemy breaking through had been a loose horse. The horse had been killed instantly at about fifty paces, which, considering the darkness, was not bad shooting.

We were still on picket duty. In camp a small force under Colonel Firman went out with waggons, probably to bring in families and grain.

March 24.  
Sunday.

I slept in the open last night. I feel very ill and weary almost to death. The times we have experienced lately would strain the strongest constitutions. I found Boughton a most interesting companion, and in the long, dreary hours of the night he related many interesting details of fermentation and the art of malt and beer making. By profession he was a brewer, and he seemed to understand his business pretty thoroughly.

At four in the afternoon it stormed and rained as badly as ever, and we again got wet through. It rained all the night, and our relief, some 35th men ordered from their post to assist us here, had to stand up the whole time; for there was no tent or shelter at this picket, which was entirely an I.Y. picket, although at some of the permanent Infantry pickets a tent was provided for the guard. I returned to camp to find my bivouac washed through, and I stood up until midnight, when, in desperation I turned in, in a very crowded tent, very much to my discomfort, but I was so weary and ill that I could stand up no longer.

The morning broke without rain, but the weather and camp was sloppy, muggy, and miserable.

March 25.

The expedition that had gone out yesterday returned at midday to-day. They had made a quarter circle north-east, and captured some grain at a farm. The men had not suffered, for they had taken tents and camped before the rain came on.

The latter half of the day proved to be fine, a delightful change—and every one was busy drying their kits. In the evening some leap-frog and high-jumping was indulged in, by which, under reaction and strain, we were as amused as a pack of children.

March 26.  
Reveille late.

Morning broke very fine and cloudless. There had been a heavy dew. Wild flowers were still blooming. The wild thyme was in blossom, a bluish violet colour. There was now in bloom a very delicate and beautiful species of shamrock, with a very exquisite little flower of a lilac colour. Crows were plentiful here; they seemed to frequent the rocks about Thaba Patschoa and neighbouring cliffs. The mealies were bearing a plentiful crop of young ears, and these we roasted and found a delightful addition to our rations.

With Marriott I cleaned the stable lines, a long and heavy job on account of the wet condition of the ground.

In the afternoon I went down to the Leeuw River and got a wash, the first opportunity that had offered.

I returned to camp and packed up everything ready for trekking, for I was warned for the night picket, and it was said that we should certainly march from here next day.

Under Corporal Ralli six of us fell in for the guard. The rest were Boughton, Baker, Marriott, and two attached men. I was again on guard with Boughton.

March 27.

My boy brought out my breakfast from camp, and Boughton and I welcomed it, for we were on the six to eight relief and were famished in the keen morning air.

We could observe all the morning a stir of the striking of camp from our post, which was a mile from camp. At five in the afternoon our Column marched out and pitched camp a half a mile beyond the Leeuw River drift, and a little later we were allowed to ride into camp. Kelsey had loaded my things on the waggon.

## CHAPTER XL

### LADYBRAND, CLOCOLAN, AND FICKSBURG

**W**E started at 9.30 a.m. with the Column of the firing-line on a Ladybrand road, and halted a short while at eleven to allow the transport to come on over a difficult road.

1901.  
March 28.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Meikle and Roberts left us this morning for Bloemfontein, both ill. I was now the last private of our Knightsbridge Barrack Room who had been able to remain with the Company throughout.

Two other comrades who left us here, ill, we were never to see again. One was Private Smart, of the Gun Section, a young, fair, good-looking fellow—civil, even, and pleasant with all his comrades; enteric took him. The other was an attached Stafford, named Lawley, who, poor fellow, was snuffed out by pneumonia.

In the afternoon we marched through Commissie Poort and turned into the Ladybrand Road on the left, leaving the road by which we had come on March 12. We camped at 2.15 p.m., near a wayside store, two miles beyond Commissie Poort picket. The telegraph line to Ladybrand ran through our camp. We marched about eight miles to-day.

Mick, the Kents' big dog, was still with us, and had followed us faithfully through all our manifold wanderings and dangers, and seemed never so happy as when he was leading the advance guard.

We started at 7.15. Thirty-fourth Company were divided. One to twenty were told off under Hall, and the rest,

March 29.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

mostly the attached men, rode under Barrington. Edmondston received permission to ride into Maseru to see Agnew. I was with Hall's party, the rear guard. It had been a fine morning, but at two o'clock it began to cloud over very darkly, and shortly after a thunderstorm broke over us with the utmost fury. The lightning was the most terrific any of us had ever experienced. It seemed to flow from the skies to the earth in pillars of fire. The din of thunder was beyond description. Either we were in the centre of it all, or there were three storms raging simultaneously, for the lightning flashed into the ground in all directions about us. The rain and hail were terrific. Hall set a splendid example of indifference. Cold followed the storm. Wet, bodily, from head to foot, shivering and miserable, we rode into camp under the long kopje range we had turned. We had marched over twelve miles, and were now but four miles from Ladybrand.

March 30.

We did not trek to-day. We were not to go into Ladybrand after all.

Sergeant Burrows was given a permit to leave for home as an "urgent case." (See order, March 21st.) He rode into Ladybrand. A few "urgent cases" in other Companies were also allowed to leave.

Near the camp was a sheep-washing kraal with good water. I had a jolly wash there.

T. Lee sewed a flannel shirt lining to an old waistcoat I had. He made an excellent job. That waistcoat had been my salvation on many a cold trek and night guard.

We dried our blankets as much as the heavy weather would allow. There was a rum issue.

Nigel Walker was now made a Corporal.

This day was memorable for its beauty and for a great reconnaissance we made.

March 31.  
levelle  
30 a.m.  
unday.

Orders were issued to saddle, with blanket and water-proof sheet, and to be prepared to remain out for the night. All kit was to be packed on the waggons, as the transport was to march on towards Ficksburg. Our



reconnoitring force consisted only of mounted men—34th, 35th, 36th, and some of the M.M.I., and some attached men. We started, with a guide, northward, but presently turned north-westward up a steep berg on to a great flat grassy tableland. We had no guns nor transport, so that progress was more rapid than usual. We galloped in a wide-extended line over the tableland, until we reached the edges of an immense cañon or basin that was covered, where rocks were not too rugged, with wide stretches of soft, green herbage. A hiding-place for an army. Sunshine and colour were brilliant, contrasted with deep shadows where tall and deeply scored cliffs towered. Somewhere I had read of "the gigantic smile of the old earth," and how "he sets his bones to bask in the sun and thrusts out knees and feet, listening the while." Here I found the picture to suit the label.

We now heard constant and heavy firing in the advance, and the left of our line came in touch with the enemy. Presently, after more hard galloping, we met the scouts of Pilcher's Column. This was our objective, it seemed. We halted for two hours while a conference went on, and then turned back in a north-easterly direction, descended into the great basin, and visited some farms. At one large farmstead we scrambled for the last few peaches of the season. The Colonel caught sight of a covey of partridges, and shot at one of the birds with his Mauser pistol. Everything had gone pleasantly and he was in the best of humours.

The day was very lovely, the scenery grand, and "on a large scale," most primal in its isolation—nakedness, ruggedness, and at times desolation. Strange birds and their lonely, melancholy notes on being disturbed heightened the effect of this unique day.

We rode over the ridge, and descended the almost perpendicular bastions we had climbed in the early morning, only much further to the north. Below us we saw our convoy trailing northward, and the huge notch of Modderpoort in front. This was held by a post of



Highlanders, and two miles beyond it we camped, just after sunset.

We found that Edmondston had returned accompanied by Heenan and Fowler. Both had almost recovered. Agnew, we were glad to hear, was better, but he was not able yet to join us.

April 1.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

We started in a northerly direction at 7.30. The 34th were again divided. Barrington headed eighteen of us, most of the old men, as advance guard, and Hall with the rest were on the left flank. For five or six miles we went briskly, pretty far in the advance, but saw nothing of the enemy. Here we topped a ridge, however, and saw a farm a half mile below us, close to the left of the road, from which two Boers, much alarmed, galloped for dear life. The left scouts, also, under Edmondston, saw five of the enemy. Barrington sent me back to Colonel Firman and Major Percival to report the presence of the enemy ahead, and they cantered forward. We then rode on towards Clocolan Stores, and all along the road the fresh tracks of fleeing horses were plainly seen as well as the track of a bicycle's tyres. It could be seen that it was only a matter of minutes since they had passed that way. When we came in sight of Clocolan Stores, where there is a collection of about a dozen houses, all on the south side of the spruit, we raced, led by Barrington, down the slope to occupy it as a position as quickly as possible. We made a hasty search in the yards and among the houses, and then crossing the spruit took up a position to the north, to cover the approach of our Column. The spruit, Maperi Spruit, was quite low, as if there had been no rain in the neighbourhood. On the banks was a huge heap of half-burned grain, wheat and mealies. All the morning we had noted the recent spoor of one of our Columns. We camped on the north bank of the spruit at 1.30 p.m. We had come about twelve miles. At one time Colonel Harley was in helio communication with some station. I was a grazing guard in the afternoon. Since yesterday we had been in view of

our old familiar landmark, the south end of Wittebergen to the northward.

I was feeling anything but well. The doctor thought liver. Tommy A. said, "'Tis 'fed up' with the weather you are."

At midnight it began to rain, heavily and steadily, and it rained and poured until ten o'clock in the morning. By that hour Maperi Spruit was on a boom, the river of brown, turbulent water was rushing down by swift leaps and slides. It had been "in orders" that we were to be ready at 7.15 a.m., to fall in for a reconnaissance, in which all the mounted men were to take part, but the order was countermanded. At about ten o'clock 34th Company were ordered to saddle and cross to the stores on wood fatigue. As soon as we had crossed we were not allowed to touch any of the wood we found there, but we were immediately ordered to return. "Wood fatigue" had been but an excuse, and we saw that we had been used to test the safety of the drift. Colonel Harley was on the north bank closely watching our progress. We all crossed and recrossed safely, but to any one familiar with streams of this type that flood almost without warning, that grow in a few hours from tiny brooks to raging torrents, there were signs that the drift was treacherous and unsafe. Our horses had just as much as they could do to keep on their feet; the waters pressed at their shoulders and we did not get through without a wetting.

At two o'clock 34th, 35th, and 36th were ordered to saddle and fall in for the postponed reconnaissance. We rode down to the drift, in drizzling rain, in column of fours. 36th led, 35th followed, and 34th brought up the rear. As we approached the drift I noted at once that the river was at least a foot higher than it had been in the morning, and I realised a real danger, for I had had experience of such streams in other parts of the world. At first, I believe, my concern was shared by few of my comrades. As the leading Company entered the drift the rear halted. We saw a serious battling of the waters by

April 2

the leading horses. I was looking on from a point about fifty yards in rear, and somewhat above, and I was watching with the utmost suspense. Would the smaller and weaker horses be able to keep their feet? Many of our mounts were in a pitifully poor condition. Good God, I thought, if one of them should fall! They were slipping and stumbling. A dozen or so reached the south bank in safety, but only after a struggle. I do not think the danger was even yet realised—that insidious and luring danger that lurks about a swift and deep ford is rarely revealed to the uninitiated except in some instant and terrible turn or manner. I had long ceased to mock at our forefathers who, when bridges were few, endowed almost every swiftly running water with some tempting, evil, or unsatisfied spirit!

The horse of young Kennard, private of 36th, fell and rose, and there was a shout of boisterous laughter from men to whom a ducking was mere sport, but again the horse blundered and fell, and this time into a curved and tumbling wave. "What *are* you laughing at?" I shouted. "Can't you see there's more of tragedy than comedy going on?" "You're right, there!" said a man. The horse rose—to swim—without his rider! There was every reason to believe that the boy had been rendered unconscious, either by a kick or by a hidden rock; he made but little struggle, and for a few seconds was tossed about by the checked but turbulent water immediately below the crossing. A Kaffir whip was thrust out to him, but he made no response; men jumped and grabbed at him but failed to reach him, and he was drifting towards the rapids. In those cataracts below the drift, it was certain that nothing could live long. Most men remained mounted—fascinated, staggered. The psychological change was a matter of seconds; by this men were moved to great excitement.

Bernard Pitt, of the 36th, a strong and splendid swimmer, was the first to make a practical move. He struck out from our side of the drift (for he was one of







JOHN CHARLES BOUGHTON,  
Dorchester, April 2, 1901.

By order of the War Office.



MEMORIAL BRASS IN LODSWORTH CHURCH, STURKE.



the 36th who had not crossed) and caught the drowning man by the hair and both were swept into the currents. Pitt was fighting for two lives now.

With Boughton, I had rushed down the banks below the drift. Boughton was a good swimmer and a strong man. I could not swim. However much I desired to help, I was powerless, and it appeared to me that no one was otherwise in such a flood. Boughton threw off his cloak and tunic and entered the water, close by the bank, where he could stand against it, and eagerly watched Pitt and his charge as they struggled desperately towards the south bank. Williams of the 36th, who had run some eighty yards down the south bank and watched the couple, now plunged in ahead of them, for Pitt was getting exhausted and there was danger of his being drowned. Williams took Kennard from Pitt's grasp for a few moments and the situation looked critical for all. Boughton was greatly moved at that. They were slipping into greater danger. "Oh, Boughton," I cried, "don't go yet, nothing on earth could cross here!" But he could not stand by and see his comrades drown without some attempt to save. His face set hard as he struck out to help them. He realised to the full the risk—that could be seen; but there was the chance to save. I shall never see a braver act than that. For a few moments he struck out to help them, to win his way across, but the midcurrent caught him as if he had been a straw and shot him down-stream.

Kelsey and I followed along the bank, running at top speed. Boughton was fighting for his own life now and only tried to keep straight on the top of the rapids. I shouted above the roar of waters to him and he turned a stern, resolute face towards me, "Oh, lad, keep up, keep up!" was all I could find to say. Once or twice Kelsey and Lieutenant Edwards of the 35th threw their long cavalry cloaks towards him as he shot by a jutting rock or a little headland, but it was all futile. A still greater danger threatened him. Ahead was a group of rocks and

boulders, and about them were furious waters tumbling and boiling. Into these he was pitched, a second later he rose and then sank. I covered my face for the horror of it. A moment after the body of young Kennard rose on the crest of the cataract and rolled under into the cauldron below.

Williams in turn had been overpowered, and had been forced to let poor Kennard go, then he struck out desperately towards Pitt and thrust him a little nearer the bank. Joyce of the 36th jumped in by the south bank, and dragged them, with others' help, from the water. Pitt remained unconscious for a long time. Williams was greatly exhausted, and James and others of 36th worked hard to revive them.

Men rushed down the spruit bank, staring into the waters,—but no one doubted that two of our comrades were dead. The Colonel's first order was that no one else was to attempt to cross. The luckless reconnaissance was "off" again.

Ropes and lines had by now arrived from camp, and vain attempts to throw one across were made, but Barrington and Hall worked hard to succeed. I caught my horse and galloped into camp and got a ball of twine that I carried in my kit. I tied one end to my pocket-knife and Barrington threw it across. By this means a light line was dragged across and then a heavy rope. Willing hands held it taut, and Barrington and Hall clutched it and, in the rush of waters, tried to feel with their feet for the bodies. It was exhausting and hopeless work, but it was the only thing that we could do. It was a sad camp that night.

April 3.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

The contemplated reconnaissance to the farm south of the spruit was given up, but one was planned for an easterly direction, towards the Basutoland border. Thirty-fourth, 35th, the Manchester Mounted Infantry, a fifteen-pounder, and a Maxim, under Colonel Firman, started at nine o'clock. We marched several miles into rugged country towards the Caledon; we burnt two farms and brought in



some families to camp. Thirty-fourth occupied a position on a very high and very steep kopje range, and our horses were held at the foot. Colonel Firman sent us orders to descend and take our horses to the top, which we did with much difficulty. All the work of the expedition was finished by 3 p.m., and the 34th returned as advance guard. We had seen no Boers all day, but when we returned to camp it was to learn that the Boers, with much effrontery, had come down and captured two teams of oxen that had been grazing not far from the pickets. The West Kents being on the south side of the river could not assist to prevent this.

I was night guard, third relief. Guard mounted at 8.30 p.m., which gave me from 12.30 a.m. to 2.30 a.m.

The river at sunset was still high, and nothing had been seen of the bodies of our comrades.

Last night, or rather early this morning, was a terrible time for us. It was a most brilliant night, the moon being at the full. The Kent lines were just above ours, the 35th were below us, that is to say, a few yards nearer the spruit. The night stable guard of the Kents during my relief was Williams. Together we walked up and down between our horse lines, talking of many things, of his help and desperate escape in the river, of the Boers driving off the oxen, and we wondered why the enemy did not make more night attacks on nights such as this one was. The camp, the white tents, the tired horses in their long, regular lines, the oxen, and the waggons—all lay bathed in the moonlight, and the stillness of the small hours was upon us. At two o'clock Micky, the Kents' dog, began to bark loudly. Williams said just then, "I must go round and see what the dog is barking at." He turned, and had gone but a little way when two shots rang out startlingly clear and near. A bullet went past my head and one grazed the eyebrows of Williams. These shots must have been signals, for after a very short pause a terrible volley was poured into the sleeping camp and into the horse lines. It was as if an electric shock had

April 4.

struck the camp. Instantly, everything that had been so quiet was in commotion. A little black horse at my left hand dropped dead ; the rest of the horses leapt forward straining their big rope, which caught me in the middle, jerked me from my feet, and dragged me some yards on the ground. Perhaps to that I owed my life, for another volley swept through and over us, wounding and killing horses, mules, and oxen, ripping tents and smashing pots and pans. Bullets buzzed about us like bees. I shouted, "Night attack!" "Night attack!" "Turn out 34th!" There was little need for shouting, the men roused themselves as quickly as sleepy, bewildered men could do. T. Lee fired our first shot ; he was ill and up when the attack began, and now he lay down by the door of his tent and fired steadily at the faint line of flashes to the west. At the waggon end of the line John Edwards and the Maxim men quickly roused, and Campbell jumped into his Maxim cart and pumped his bullets unceasingly over our heads, towards the line of flashing Mausers. It is my conviction that it was this timely preparedness on the part of Campbell that broke the resolution of the Boers, for it caused the first lull in their attack. I crept to my bivouac for my rifle and bandolier, and the sensation of being armed gave me new confidence. Ralli, notwithstanding he had received a bullet through his arm, rushed out of his tent, out of the lines, towards the Boers, and began firing. Weisberg followed him. The pom-pom fired a few shots and then jammed. Many men by this time had fallen in, and we were led in extended order out towards the Boer position ; after a run to a wire fence we lay down and poured in many volleys at a range which was now seen to be on the other side of the spruit. The enemy ceased fire. The infantry came up, and soon all our pickets were greatly increased.

The Imperial Yeomanry were ordered to return to their lines and to stand by their horses, which they saddled. We were eager to learn what casualties there were. Lieutenant Edwards of 35th had been dangerously

wounded. Spicer\* of 35th was shot through the leg. Ralli through the arm. A Kaffir driver was mortally wounded—many horses, mules, and oxen had been killed. The perforated tents and bivouacs bore witness to the accuracy of the Boer fire. Only the uneven nature of the ground saved the casualty lists from being very heavy.

The treacherous spruit had subsided during the night, and the enemy had become aware of this and had crept down the bed of it and crossed it to our almost unguarded re-mount kraal by the stores, and under cover of the attack they had driven off over four hundred horses we had collected on our trek. It was altogether a nasty knock.

At 5.30 all the available mounted men rode out under Firman to patrol the neighbourhood of camp. As we neared a great kopje to the north-west we came under fire from a body of the enemy holding a farm at its foot. They were soon shelled out of it, and then we swept around to the north-east and into camp again by about seven o'clock. I had not slept all night, with a hard day yesterday, and a still harder one before us.

In camp we learnt that poor Boughton's body had just been discovered among the rocks below, and that we were to trek at nine o'clock. We got a hasty mouthful to eat, and loaded our kits on the waggon.

A fatigue party of 34th quickly dug a grave close by the camp, and we buried our poor comrade as the Convoy trekked out. The fifteen-pounder was all the while close by us firing at the Boers who were closing in for a rearguard skirmish. Barrington read the service very beautifully, and at the Lord's Prayer there were few dry eyes. Boughton had died a hero, and he was buried as became a soldier.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

We now found ourselves to be the rearguard, and all

\* Herbert Murray Spicer was murdered in the Euston Road, London, Tuesday, June 8rd, 1902.



the morning, until past noon, we kept up a desultory rear-guard skirmish. Bullets sometimes came nearer than was pleasant. Once my horse jumped forward ten feet or more as a bullet zipped over his ears. We halted for some hours near Newberry's Park and residence. The owner was a very wealthy man. He had built a big house by a kopje-side, and planted his property very picturesquely with thousands of trees. In the fenced grounds he had large herds of buck and wildebeeste. During this halt several families were picked up at farms, much grain was taken, and large quantities of fodder burnt. The march continued towards Ficksburg—a long and severe march, in which the rear guard helped several exhausted Worcester Infantrymen along by giving them a lift. The weather had been hot all the day, but at sunset the skies became overcast, and a storm broke over us from a lurid, yellow sky. We got very wet. I had been on the go almost constantly for thirty-six hours, without sleep, and I was shivering and chilled with wet and weariness, and I had no cloak. We came to Mitchell's Mills, three miles or so from Ficksburg. I begged permission to call at the house of Mr. Challis, with whom I was acquainted. I got a hot cup of tea there, and feeling very weary I asked permission to lie on the floor and sleep. I slept until morning! Mr. Challis gave me a stable and feed for my horse. My clothes were dried at the fire while I slept.

The Worcesters camped at the Mills. The wounded Kaffir driver had died on trek, and was buried in the neighbourhood of the Mills.

## CHAPTER XLI

### FINAL WORK AT FICKSBURG

ON riding into camp this morning I was immediately made a prisoner by Edmondston for being absent from the lines. 1901.  
April 5.

It was a very quiet day, for which I was thankful, for I was feeling very ill.

I was taken before the Colonel, who, very properly, April 6 dealt severely with me, giving me ten days' C.C.\* W—— got five days for an exactly similar offence. Five or six others in —— Company were not even arrested for a longer absence than my own.

I was called to give evidence in the inquiry as to the deaths of Boughton and Kennard. The board consisted of Major Chichester of 1st Worcesters, Captain Blackburne, 36th I.Y., and a subaltern of the Worcesters.

There was a rum issue. We were paid ten shillings from the "Yeomanry Fund."

The following order was read out to us :—

The Commanding Officer desires to place on record the admiration of himself and all the officers, N.C.O.'s, and men of the Battalion on the gallant conduct of Troopers Boughton (34th Squadron), Pitt, and Williams (36th Squadron) in attempting to save from drowning Trooper Kennard at Maperi River, in which attempt Trooper Boughton unfortunately lost his own life.

By order,

(Signed)

W. G. DIXON,

Captain and Adjutant.

\* Confined to Camp.

April 7.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

I was warned for grazing guard, but feeling ill I hired a substitute from the attached men. I wished to see the doctor. Edmondston and Cowan objected, and refused to sanction the exchange. I said, "I shall have to 'go sick' to-day, as I *must* see the doctor." Cowan said, "Very well; I shall write opposite your name 'Defaulter; warned for guard.'" I told him that did not much matter, because the doctor would judge. I was feeling ill, and my left thumb had festered through the chill of the night of the 4th. I was confident no doctor would turn me away in the state of health I was. Under Corporal Ralli I went with T. Lee and several others to Dr. Michell, the doctor of the day. Cowan's pleasant recommendation caused him at first to regard me sternly, but as he examined me he spoke very kindly to me, and after prescribing for me he wrote on my report, "Medicine and light duty." He then cut my thumb, and dressed it. He said I ought to have come to him sooner. I said that I would have come yesterday but that I had had to go before the Colonel, and there were other duties.

Lee was sent into hospital; he was very ill.

There was Church Parade at eleven.

April 8.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Orders were issued for every available man for reconnaissance duty for 7.45. I was ready, but was ordered to remain to see another doctor. Surgeon-Captain Murray was the doctor to-day. He ordered me port, liniment for arm, light duty, &c.

I was told to hold myself as a witness in the inquiry as to the loss of horses of officers in the night attack, but I was not called.

The reconnoitring force only saw six Boers at long range. They brought in on waggons grain, furniture, &c., from a farm near Hammonia. It was an all-day job on account of a bad spruit crossing.

Dr. Michell called on me in the afternoon to see how I was.

April 9.

I was ordered before the doctor again, and to-day I was

told to go into the Convalescent Home in the town. With a number of others we went through several forms, and in the afternoon I found myself in a much overcrowded schoolhouse at the south-west corner of town. There were many convalescent enteric cases, some looking desperately ill and weak. It was not a cheerful haven, and I determined to leave it as soon as possible.

An inquiry into the night attack was in progress to-day. Williams told me that he had been called to give evidence. April 10.

The Battalion had nothing to do.

Some of us were moved into another house, quite the other side of town. The new quarters were said to be the Dutch Parsonage. It was a large and comfortable place. The great quince hedges about the Ficksburg homesteads were laden down with golden fruit.

There were nine I.Y. men in our room. Ralli was here with his arm in a sling. His wound does not trouble him much. April 11.

The Parsonage grounds were very prettily planted with thick privet hedges, firs, fruit trees, figs, and locust trees. We got plain but good food, and we were allowed to dine at Harvey's, in town.

There was a reconnaissance around Imperani Mountain, some of the force going by way of Willow Grange, others by Mitchell's Mills. They came back late, and some of the 35th lost themselves and remained out all night.

Grain and forage were brought back without any opposition.

The Boers sniped our outposts just after sunset.

There was little doing to-day. The men were given a rest after yesterday's long day. April 12.

I joined the library kept by Mr. Austen. It had a very good, if limited, selection of books. It is a semi-private concern, and originally thirty members, Ficksburg people, belonged to it. Fees were most reasonable.

We were paid on account. Ralli brought my pay from camp. April 13.



There were races. I did not attend, although ambulances came to take men who desired to go.

I met and had a talk with Mr. Langridge, of Langridge's Farm, near Harrismith.

April 14.  
Sunday.

I was much better, though not well by any means. I went up to Lieutenant Crook's quarters to do some writing for him.

There was an inspection by the medical officer in charge. I reported myself as better, and able to return to the lines.

I tried to deliver three letters, which had come by yesterday's mail, to Lee in hospital, but I found him too ill to receive them.

Phillips was made a corporal, and Clifford, who had been in hospital for some weeks, returned to the lines. Edmondston was made sergeant.

April 15.

The battalion of mounted men, with a fifteen-pounder, pom-pom, and Maxim, went out to "Windsor Castle Kopje," the kopje from which the main body was fired at last February 4th, east of Willow Grange. Thirty-fourth occupied the high ridge to the left of it, and the 53rd rode up to the kopje. They did not occupy it without a heavy volley being fired into them. One of the 53rd—a man named Fleming—had a Mauser bullet through the tip of his nose, a very remarkable and cleanly-punctured wound. Some horses were wounded. A severe fire was turned on the Boers, and it was very apparent that there were casualties both among their men and horses.

Several of us left the Convalescent Home for the lines—Ralli, myself, and Sandford and Powis of 35th.

Roberts returned, recovered from his indisposition, from Bloemfontein Hospital.

My Kaffir boy seemed glad to see me back. He had faithfully looked after my bivouac, horse, &c., during my absence. My report was marked, "Three days' light duty."

Poor Lee, who had stood in line with me to see the doctor on the 7th instant, died at five o'clock in the





T. LEE.  
Died of Enteric, April 15, 1901.



E. A. BRADLEY.  
Died of Enteric, May 31, 1901.



C. E. FORTESCUE.  
Died of Enteric, January 2, 1901.

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evening of enteric. Truly a swift taking off. God be merciful to our remnant!

Agnew returned to the Company. He was looking much better, but weak.

A miscellaneous and despoiled lot of kit came up to us representing kits of our Company that had been left at Thaba N'chu almost a year ago.

Barrington was very kind about my returning to work, and said I was to take it easy if I felt like it. He told me that Captain Brune had written, and sent me a message. April 16.

At 4.30 p.m. we all fell in for poor T. Lee's funeral. We carried him to the cemetery, where the Chaplain met us and read the service. There were thirty or forty graves of English soldiers there. Of nearly all our soldiers buried there the crosses stated that they had died of disease. I only saw one instance of "died of wounds," and none of "killed in action."

The weather was fine and the changes in the Maluti mountains, of light shade and colour, are vivid and frequent.

I was dismounted grazing guard. At 8.30 we drove the squadron's horses to the Caledon drift to water and then to the south grazing grounds, beyond the pickets. There was very little grass, and the horses were restless and roaming in their search for it. Paparritor, Bradley, Marriott, Christy, and Heenan were the others—we returned with our charges at sunset. April 17.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

There was talk of races, and Fowler was desirous of riding my pony, Prinsloo, which was one of the fastest in the lines. I had been riding him constantly for nearly nine months.

The usual force, with the exception of 35th Company, which remained in camp, went out with three days' rations on the Ladybrand Road. They were to destroy grain on the banks of the Caledon. The transport went down the river on the Basuto side to meet the fighting force at a place appointed. April 18.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.

I had become acquainted with a pleasant old Afrikander couple named Mitchley. At a very fair price they supplied us with good meals, bread and fruit. The old man had been a great deal about South Africa and was full of information—pioneer information—of almost every part of it.

The Serjeant-Major invited three of us to "a little game of whist" after supper. No Provost-Sergeant molested us.

April 19.

Shortly after noon the advance guard began to come in. The force had gone to cover the approach of a larger force from Ladybrand way. A great quantity of grain was taken from Stevens' Stores on a Caledon drift, about fifteen miles or so south. Thirty-fourth had been right flank guard going out and rear guard on the return. Heavy firing had been heard in the direction of Clocolan.

April 20.

There was little doing to-day. The races began at 2.30. Prinsloo, my pony, was disallowed in his class as being a trifle over fourteen hands. A Basuto magistrate brought over two English thoroughbreds and gave us an exhibition race. R.-Sergt.-Major Peacock's "Jack" ran in this race and did not disgrace himself. There were a few very interesting races.

April 21.  
Reveille  
5.45 a.m.  
Sunday.

I was on mounted grazing guard all day. Before we went out we were treated to two very exciting 100 yds. foot-races. Marriott and Richards ran. Richards won the first and Marriott the second.

April 22.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

The whole Battalion of mounted men, three fifteen-pounders, a pom-pom, and a Maxim, and a Company of Worcesters trekked out on the road north of Zoutkop, and towards the Windsor Castle kopje. This kopje is of peculiar form, narrow, long, and steep, with big rocks naturally disposed, resembling the towers of a castle. From this kopje a number of the enemy persistently refused to be dislodged by our heavy shelling for an hour or more. They must have had good cover or our shells did not find them. They kept up a rifle reply to us. When their fire had ceased, 34th was ordered to gallop



forward under Barrington and scale the kopje. The summit was clear.

Of the 53rd who had been advance guard to the right of the kopje three horses were killed—one had received no less than eight bullets; one wound was so large as to suggest explosive qualities to the missile. We all returned to camp at Willow Grange. We have three days' rations.

We started out from Willow Grange to a farmstead lying to the north of the Castle Kopje. We took twenty waggons to get in grain which was stored there. We moved on to our point in Battalion order, the 36th leading. As we approached the Castle Kopje the Kents led on, and other Companies swerved to the right and left to ridges; 34th under Barrington, Hall, and Agnew went to the left and climbed to the summit of the great berg on the north end. We disturbed about twenty Boers on the next ridge beyond and we exchanged volleys, but as the range was long we did not waste much ammunition.

April 23.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

The day was exquisitely clear and fine, and from the summit of our position we could see Tafelberg, Wonderkop, and Witkop, and the south end of the long Wittebergen range stood up behind the Castle kopje. About one o'clock we saw about ninety Boers making off in a north-easterly direction into the foothills of the Wittebergen. At 2.30 the waggons had completed their day's work, and we retired as rear guard, slowly, to Willow Grange Camp. We arrived late in the afternoon very tired and hungry.

We went out in a similar order to that of yesterday's, towards the same place, only to-day we took the Company of Staffords Infantry with us. It was believed that the enemy had re-occupied the positions and meant to give us trouble to-day. Colonel Firman ordered the mounted men to charge in open battalion order across the approach, to dismount at the foot of and climb the great range which 34th had held all yesterday. Boers were all along this summit line, and as we galloped down to the berg's

April 24.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.



foot they fired several volleys into us without a single hit. Before we had reached the top they had cleared from this position, and we then held the long summit by groups of dismounted men. The pom-pom, with infinite labour, presently followed us. Our position was so high as to overlook the Windsor Castle kopje. Far away below we saw the Staffords open out into a long line and advance to occupy the Castle kopje. It seemed incredible that the enemy still lurked there, for our position practically flanked it though at long range. The Artillery in rear fired a few shells over the Infantry to the Castle, and we could see them burst behind and about the fin-like rocks; not a sign of the enemy could be seen. We saw the Infantry, tiny khaki specks, creeping (they were really going at a good pace) towards the base of the kopje. At seven hundred yards the Mausers cracked and chattered in an ugly way and we saw men fall. The line moved on. The Artillery burst out as if in indignation, and smashed shell after shell at the place where the enemy were thought to be. The Boers slipped down the south-east end, out of our sight, and rode off, but they had done their day's work! Two Staffords were killed, two wounded, and their O.C., Captain Blackwood, was shot through the arm.\*

The remainder of the grain was loaded and sent into Willow Grange, and then we all returned to Ficksburg to camp.

One of the poor fellows killed was a man who had served his sixteen years and nine months that should have left him free to leave the Army.

A quiet day for all of us. I went down to the Caledon and bathed and afterwards had dinner in town. There were many rumours of future activities for us. It was also said that General Rundle was on his way to Ficksburg.

Some of the West Kents came over in the evening and had a chat with me at my bivouac.

\* A year later, April 20, 1902, at Olivier's Farm, Malman's Hoek, not far from this position, Captain Blackwood was killed.

April 25.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.





PERCY JOHN SMART.  
Died of Enteric, April 15, 1901.



W. ELLIS BLYTH.  
Died of Enteric, January 12, 1901.



COSMO W. BLOUNT.  
Died of Enteric, February 16, 1901.

My Kaffir boy Jim, now that I had paid him a month's wages, was desirous of going to Basutoland to spend his little fortune, and as a boy with a set desire of that sort becomes no use as a servant, I let him go.

April 26.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

With Roberts, Heenan, Baker, and some attached men I was on grazing guard.

We now had to furnish daily a few mounted men for extra outpost duty at Mitchell's Mills, Willow Grange, and the Remount Kraals.

I entered my name for a pass to town this morning and some one—I could not discover who, but it was not one of my officers, of that I assured myself—endorsed my pass "Not entitled to a pass." I had reason to think that the Provost-Sergeant still pursued.

April 27.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

We received the sad news of poor Smart's death of enteric on April 15th. He had left us at Warringham's Store.

There was very heavy rain and thunder during the night. It washed away a good deal of dirt and rubbish about the lines.

April 28.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

The balance of the "County Fund," \* which came to 11s. 10d. each man, was paid by Sergt.-Major Cowan.

It rained all the night. The morning broke with a heavy and threatening sky, and at seven o'clock the down-pour began again. Some one stole the headstall from my pony, turning him loose from the line. I got very wet searching about, but I found my missing halter!

April 29.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

The grazing was put off on account of the terrible condition of the weather. After dinner it cleared a little; the tops of the Maluti mountains were covered with snow, and the dark thunder-clouds banked about them, made a startling and wonderful contrast.

Pickets have been moved a mile further out, towards the south. Only the horses of 34th were sent out to graze. Weisberg, I, and one attached man were the mounted guards. The pickets fired three sniping shots,

\* We never learned what these "County" and "Yeomanry" funds were, out of which we received two or three small payments.



which was a signal that kept us alert—as a rule there were no incidents of this kind attending our grazing guards.

There were now persistent rumours that General Rundle was approaching Ficksburg.

A patrol of the 35th went out to a farm near Commando Nek.

April 30.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

The night was intensely cold and damp, on account, probably, of the snow on the mountains. A dense fog hung over camp until nine o'clock. It was a very cheerless morning. Many of our horses had become ill, and Vet.-Captain Wallis was kept busy. The Adjutant, Capt. Dixon, ordered a general line-cleaning fatigue, and the Colonel and the Battalion officers came down in a band from the plantation where their quarters were, and looked on.

Some more attached Regulars joined our lines to-day.

Carey of the 35th received a Commission, which news I was glad to hear.

The Sergeant-Major offered me a pass to the town. He said he was wanting a pair of shoes. Cost 12s. 6d.

I took a letter to the fever hospital for Curtis, one of the 34th attached men, who was down with enteric. He was very ill indeed.

May 1.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Stables were inaugurated again at 6.30 a.m. This was a battalion order. It was rather a farce, for there was not a grooming kit left in the lines, and men, to keep moving, rubbed their horses with sticks or jam tins. One brush that turned up was in great demand. Also, all grazing guards were ordered to report at the quarter guard tent at 8.30 sharp. We are to be quite regenerated it seems, and we are looking for the General any moment!

I was grazing guard again to-day. Corporal Meeson of 35th was in charge, and we lunched together on the ridge and talked over the year's doings since we had made a journey together almost a year before. The weather was perfect, and the Malutis, again free of snow, were lovely in their cloudless beauty of blue tints and in their lights and shadows. All Nature looked washed,



clean, and fresh; the blue hills were like islands in a tropic sea, and peace seemed to reign supreme—

“O God, who art the Author of peace, give us peace. Amen.”

Poor Curtis of the Staffords, attached, died at two o'clock.

Last night, after sunset, a party made up of members of our various companies, twenty men in all, under Lieut. Crook of the 35th, guided by Rutherford\* and some Kaffirs, went out to a farm south-west beyond Mitchell's Mills and surprised two Boers and captured them with their saddled horses, Mausers loaded with soft-nosed cartridges, and bandoliers filled with soft-nosed ammunition. The expedition returned at 5 a.m. Edmondston, Christy, and Phillips went from our lines.

May 2.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Curtis was buried this morning.

There were many new restrictions enforced and stables were ordered twice daily.

Forty of the attached Regulars of our Battalion left us to-day. It was said that they were going to Pretoria.

The Sergeants of the Battalion gave a dance in the town in the evening.

I was warned for remount kraal guard, to report to Captain Wallis.

Paparritor, Weisberg, and I, under Corporal Phillips, mounted guard at the kraal last night. I had third relief. The kraal is an enclosure on the south side of town near our first Ficksburg camping-ground. The walls were pretty thick and high, and built of the loose ironstones that abound here; no mortar or mud was used in their construction. They are of the type common in use among the natives for sheep and cattle enclosures. There was a house at one corner of the enclosure, but it

May 3.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

\* Rutherford was a settler of the O.V.S. and had lived some years at Hammonia. He did very able and active service in the Intelligence Department. He was a fearless and clever man and made some smart captures and came through some desperate encounters. He had been warned by the enemy that if he were caught death awaited him.

was in such a filthy condition that I preferred the open. It was a cold, frosty night and full moonlight. A man named Campbell, resembling much more a Boer than a Scotchman, with a lot of unruly Kaffir boys, fed, watered, and took charge of the horses. Our duty was simply that of an armed guard. We were relieved by a 36th guard at seven o'clock a.m.

It was a quiet day in camp. Some sports were got up in the afternoon. The weather was perfect, and the leaves of the trees, especially of the poplars, are golden and fragile, indicating the approach of winter.

I hired a new boy, who called himself Clemboy.

May 4.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

Stables and watering orders. I was for grazing guard, mounted and armed. One of the Ficksburg small fry, named Willie MacMasters, with whom I had scraped an acquaintance, came out with some fruit for me. We prepared coffee and lunched together, much to his enjoyment. We all returned to camp at 3 p.m.

Agnew asked me to come, with others, for a trial race to see if Prinsloo was good enough to enter the next Monday's races. In the evening I rode my pony against a half-dozen others in a half-mile trial. He proved very fast, much the fastest of his class. Roberts's horse, of a larger class, ridden by Fowler, was the only one who could keep pace with him.

The new attached men, under Corporal Brierley, left to-day for their regimental quarters.

The duties for the few remaining men became very severe and little time was found for doing those little things for ourselves which would have made our life more bearable.

A comet has become visible for an hour after sunset in the west or north-west. It must be a great comet; it is plain even in the twilight of the west.

May 5.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

Grazing guard with Fowler, Christy, and Paparritor. There were few horses with so many men gone! There were only two or three attached Worcesters left with us of the Regulars. Christy and I had tea together; we were stationed just above the Caledon bluffs.





RIDGE COVER, NEAR COMMANDO NEK.



DONGA COVER, SHOWING THE PECULIAR ACTION OF WATER ON THE SOIL.

*To face page 445.*



I was one of the quarter guard, we mounted guard under Corporal Phillips at ten o'clock.

May 6.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

There were races to-day. I was on duty. Fowler rode my pony, but did not win. Prinsloo did very well, however, against bigger horses.

I was on guard when orders were issued for a trek, and I was desperately pushed for time to pack my kit after my relief. There was no time for me to get breakfast. We started at eight o'clock. The Colonel rowed the officers for lack of promptness. All the mounted men, including a newly-completed company of Worcester Mounted Infantry, three fifteen-pounders, a pom-pom, a Maxim, and three companies of Infantry, marched on past Zoutkop to Commando Nek. We met no opposition until we got to Commando Nek. As 34th rode through, as pom-pom guard, the Boers opened fire from the high cliffs to the left, and for a few minutes we galloped up the pass under a heavy fire, as was apparent by whizzing and cracking bullets about us. There were no casualties, and the pom-pom whisked about at the notch and played a stream of shells on the enemy, and we heard no more of them. A few of the Imperial Yeomanry had passed up before us quite unmolested, so we supposed that the sight of the pom-pom was too much for the patience of the enemy. It was curious that 34th should again have been the Company to catch it at this spot. After pickets had been posted we rode back to the west side of the Nek to camp. Our camp was in helio communication with some one—I think with a station near Thlotse, which was not far from us, over the Caledon about four miles in a bee-line.

May 7.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

The comet was very beautiful at 7 p.m. It was due west. I examined it with some good field-glasses.

Thirty-fourth and 36th were advance guard and trotted up through the Nek on to the Fouriesburg Road; then 36th extended and advanced and 34th took up a position to the left. Four miles straight ahead could be seen a column advancing, which we soon knew to be General

May 8.  
Reveille 5 a.m.



Rundle's. It busily shelled the great cliffs to the north of the road. Near our post was a farm, from which we were able to get some good oranges. About noon we were called upon to help to occupy some of the immense ridges and huge kopjes to the north-east, and we soon got into a region of the wildest description—among the tumbled bergs that surround the south end of the Wittebergen. We held a position here until the big Column had camped below us and until the Infantry, Manchesters' and Scots Guards' pickets came up. We saw few Boers, but a Cossack post at our right under Edmondston were rather surprised by a sniper's bullet which came to take part in "a little game" of poker they were enjoying. It was a rude interruption and subsequently, in a more secluded spot, the question as to the ownership of the "pot" came under warm discussion. We rode down to camp at 4.30 p.m. and there caught our first sight of the "new" Yeomanry. Most of them were unmounted.

May 9.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

Our time was put on forty minutes, so that we were up, breakfasted, and saddled long before daylight. We stood by our horses until the first streak of dawn and then rode up and past our high positions of yesterday. There was a big movement of all the Columns under General Rundle. Our Battalion, in advance, halted at the "divide" of a great basin to allow the cow-gun and fifteen-pounders to come forward. Then the whole Battalion rode over the ridge down into the basin beyond. The Companies extended and charged in fan shape to various points on the other side; 34th, with Barrington, Agnew, and Hall leading, galloped at a terrific pace to kopjes two miles distant on our left and arrived there without opposition. Two Mauser shots rang out as we arrived at our point, but no one was seen and we heard no bullets. We found that we were only about three or four miles east of Windsor Castle Kopje and that we were now looking behind the scenes of our operations of April 24th. We held this position all the day, keeping a sharp

look-out. Agnew climbed to the top of an almost precipitous cliff or block berg and on its summit he found two bedsteads, four chairs, and a table. All but two chairs were thrown over the precipice and smashed to pieces. The chairs he brought down for the use of the guard, much to our amusement. Late in the afternoon a fifteen-pounder and a Company of Infantry joined us and we marched around to the Ficksburg side of Commando Nek. In this march Weisberg and I acted as advance scouts.

The comet was about at its best some time after sunset that evening. It was a beautiful sight.

We started from camp, which was on the west end of Commando Nek, for Ficksburg at 7.30 a.m. Colonel Firman rode with 34th as reserve guard. At Zoutkop General Rundle rode up with his Staff to examine that curious landmark. Shortly after he took up a position to the left of the road and ordered the West Kents to halt for inspection, and after this function had been got through we were all ordered to march past the General at the carry. There was not much of 34th left to inspect!

May 10.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

We arrived at Ficksburg early and camped in our old lines.

Heenan and I were immediately warned for mounted orderly duty at the "orderly-room" tent. We had a good deal to do. I had the disagreeable duty of orderly sentry over some men of other Companies who had got into trouble and were to be examined before the Colonel. The Colonel was very severe, for the trouble was connected with neglect of duty on stable guard.

The nights were getting very cold.

May 11.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

There were many rumours afloat of our leaving for Harrismith with General Rundle.

The General was busy inspecting the gaol, the outposts, hospital, camps, &c.

Rutherford, I was told, had left the Intelligence Department, much to the surprise of our men, who all have a high opinion of him. It was said that he

would undoubtedly join the Battalion Staff with Colonel Firman.

Fowler, E. V. Wilshin, and I, under Corporal Phillips, were warned for the kraal guard. We went out to the kraals at sunset. I determined to sleep in the open, cold as it was at night; the house was too stuffy and evil-smelling after continual fresh air.

The comet might still be seen in the west, but it was now very faint.

## CHAPTER XLII

### MORE BRANDWATER BASIN

OUR kraal guard was not relieved this morning, and we were ordered by Captain Wallis to remain at our post. Agnew rode up to say that the Company was moving out with the Column, and that we could not be spared from the Company. Captain Wallis insisted that he could not do without a guard, and so we were ordered to remain. I saw Ralli long enough to be able to ask him to keep a diary of all the movements of the 34th until I should be able to return to the Company.

1901.  
May 12.  
Sunday.

*[The following is the copy of a diary kept at my request by Corporal Ralli. It follows the movements and operations of 34th during the time I remained one of the four Remount Guards. I got this from Ralli, two weeks later, at Brindisi Crossing, when the guard rejoined the Company, May 26.]*

### CORPORAL RALLI'S DIARY

Marched at 8 a.m. Thirty-fourth were advance guard to Commando Nek, which was held by the Manchester Regiment.

May 12.  
Reveille  
3.45 a.m.  
Sunday.

Paraded 7.45. Rear guard. Marched through General's Nek to Brindisi. Rear guard moved off at eleven. We were late getting into camp. Very cold day. Harley's Brigade joined a part of the Division here.

May 13.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

At Brindisi Crossing of the Caledon. Day in camp. General Rundle came in from Ficksburg.

May 14.

Thirty-fourth, 35th, and 36th Companies under Captain Pott marched to outflank a kopje north of Bester's Vlei.

May 15.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Remainder of mounted troops marched along the road. Transport moved at 7 a.m. We outflanked the kopje in the dark; practically no opposition. Very cold. Remainder of troops then advanced. We reached Fouriesburg and camped about midday.

May 16.  
Reveille  
5.15 a.m.

Marched at 7 a.m. up the valley or basin towards Surrender Hill, to the Mills. The camp at Fouriesburg was left standing. Blankets were carried in a waggon. We met Boers at once and fought all day. Cow-guns and fifteen-pounders were very busy. Hot fire. Cleared away Boers and took Terahn's Mill. Burnt it. Boers fought very stubbornly. Camped at the Mill. Several Boer casualties. We reached camp after dark having nearly lost our way.

The Gun Section and Manchesters started earlier than we did, and occupied ridges above the Mill, and the Scots Guards advanced along the ridges near the Basutoland Border.

May 17.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

Paraded at 7 a.m. Marched and occupied Basuto Kopje; met little opposition. Transport advanced a few miles and camped at Inhoek Camp. We returned there early, at noon. Rest of force under Rundle returned later. They had operated north-west of us, but had met with little opposition.

May 18.

Inhoek Camp. Stayed in camp. Tents, &c., arrived from Fouriesburg. Sent out strong pickets, as it was said that the camp was to be attacked. No attack was made.

May 19.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

Inhoek Camp. Paraded at 8 a.m. Looted two farms in — Hoek. Thirty-fourth, 35th, and 36th Companies drove off the stock. Boers sniped most of the time, but ineffectually. Plenty of fowls and vegetables. Sixty-second and 53rd did similar work in another direction.

May 20.  
Reveille  
5.45 a.m.

Marched at 7.45 a.m. a short distance to Villiers' Drift. Thirty-fourth was advance guard. Camped at Rauterback camp. Gun Section and twenty of the 53rd under Colonel Firman had started at midnight to surprise a farm there. Boers had left. Plenty of poultry. At 3 p.m. we turned out to clear the Boers off a kopje.





EARLY MORNING WATERING AT THE CALEDON RIVER, FICKSBURG: A GLIMPSE  
OF BASUTOLAND.



A DUMMY GUN AT FOURIESBURG.

*To face page 450.*



Thirty-fourth, 35th, and the M.M.I. were on the right of kopje. Fifty-third and 62nd and one gun and the pom-pom were to the left of kopje. We found plenty of Boers, who fired on us, but being outflanked retired towards N——? Nek. We camped at 6 p.m.

Marched at 9.45. Thirty-fourth advance guard. We arrived at Fouriesburg and camped at the same old ground. At 2 p.m. the rear guard was reported hung up. Thirty-fourth and 35th saddled, cantered about one and a half miles, when we found the difficulties over. Back to camp at Fouriesburg.

May 21.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

In camp at Fouriesburg. Thirty-fourth turned out at 11 a.m. to escort a Kaffir runner to the Caledon River. Back about 2.30 p.m. There was a little sniping of our pickets.

May 22.

Marched at 8 a.m. Main body of Harley's 17th Brigade marched to Brindisi. Camped at old place above the drift.

May 23.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

In camp all day.

May 24.

Paraded at 8.15. All the mounted troops, two guns, and one pom-pom marched towards Rooi Krans. Thirty-fourth flanked, seven on either side of guns, about one mile out. Two farms were looted. Lots of poultry, bread, &c., evidently constantly in the use of the Boers. There was slight opposition though a sniping fire was steadily maintained by the Dutch. The guns covered us. A few sheep and about fifty horses were captured from under the noses of the enemy. We came in touch with Colonel Romney's Column. Back to camp about 4 p.m. An artillery and ammunition waggon, drawn by six horses, capsized into a donga on the way back. No damage was done.

May 25.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

[Corporal Ralli's Diary ended here.]

At Ficksburg our life and work as kraal guard was interesting only so far as it throws a light on work that men were sometimes called upon to do Company. A brief epitome will suf

May 12-25.  
Kraal Guard  
at Ficksburg.

Captain Wallis was assisted in the veterinary work by Private Wyles of the 53rd I.Y. Wallis and Campbell lived in the town. The rest of us lived at the kraal. There were nearly four hundred horses in the enclosures. Every night we did sentry duty, two hours on and four off, during darkness, and we constantly patrolled around the enclosures. Every day the horses had to be guarded to the Caledon to water, and then away to the grazing grounds south. The Kaffirs attended to the horses; our duty was simply to stand on guard watching for the enemy or keeping the herders up to the mark. It was an all-day job, and we took our rations with us and cooked them in the field. At night, before turning in, the Kaffir boys would become very noisy and dance weird war dances about the fire, or chant rhythmic incantations with curious motions of the body. My own Kaffir boy proved very useful to us all, and cooked our breakfasts.

On the morning of the 12th General Rundle and his staff rode by the kraal on the way to Mitchell's Mills for an inspection of outposts. On the 13th two handsome grey mares were taken from the kraal for a present for Chief Jonathan as a recognition, we imagined, of that chief's goodwill. Captain Wallis thought, on the 14th, that our work could be made lighter by getting an extra man, and Private Ovenden, a convalescent of the 4th Glamorgan I.Y., joined our guard. This not only made our night guards shorter, but the grazing guards were afterwards done by couples, so that that work only came to us every other day. Of our own men, in hospital, Bradley was very ill of enteric fever, and Farrier-Sergeant Weedon had recovered enough to do duty at the drift. On the 16th news reached us that poor old Carmichael, the guide, of Hibernia, had been captured and killed with a Kaffir by the Boers as he was scouting for Pilcher's Column between Clocolan and Trommel. His savings of £50 had been taken from his body. This was as the news came to us. He had a wife who had baked many a



loaf for us in the Klip Nek days, and he left several little children !

On the morning of the 17th we heard from our grazing grounds rapid exchanges of Mauser and rifle fire from a point beyond Mitchell's Mill. Shortly after a gun and reinforcements went out. It transpired that a small party of Worcester Infantry, under Lieutenant Hodder, had taken a waggon beyond Mitchell's Mill to a farm for fodder, and they had been attacked by forty or fifty of the enemy on surrounding ridges and had had to fight their way back and abandon the waggon. Before retiring they shot the oxen. Two men were severely wounded, but were brought in under fire. On the 18th the pickets on the summit of Imperani Mountain were sniped. It was very evident that the Boers were well aware of the comparative smallness of the force then at Ficksburg. Next day the Provost-Marshal of Ficksburg, Major Steward, visited the kraal with Wallis. On the 21st De Wet was reported to be in the neighbourhood of Wonderkop and our Klip Nek ground. When not on day duty we were allowed to dine in the town, and very good meals our old friends the Mitchleys provided for us. On the 22nd Bradley was reported dangerously ill.

On the morning of May 23rd we were ordered to pack up and march with the Remounts through Basutoland to Brindisi Crossing. At one o'clock we got our horses, over three hundred of them, across the Caledon. Captain Wallis, Campbell, Wyles, our guard, Strong, a convalescent of 35th, twenty Kaffirs, a waggon and Cape cart completed our party. Major Goldfinch rode part of the way with Wallis, on his way to rejoin his Company, the M.M.I. We reached the precincts of Thlotse by night-fall. Ovenden was here in clover, as Carter and Stevens, the well-known traders, were his relatives. The weather was all that could be desired. The next day, being the late Queen's birthday, all Thlotse was in holiday attire, and races were in full swing. As we rode out we met hundreds of natives hurrying forward to the fun. All



day the South Wittebergen country was spread out before us across the Caledon like a map. There were Commando and General's Neks, Malman's and Frans Hoeks, the Rooi Krans, Bambush Berg, Bester's Vlei, the Brandwater Basin, and the Fouriesburg country, and, overshadowing all, the landmark peaks of Wittebergen. We arrived at night near Brindisi, and far across we viewed the camp of our Brigade. Next morning, the 25th, we had little to do. All the way we had had our nightly guards to do. A long procession of Boer waggons with families, brought in from the Brandwater Basin, passed us on their way down country. As they caught sight of us the girls began singing hymns rather vociferously; it seemed less for spiritual comfort than *at us*. The weather was threatening, and Corporal Phillips hit upon the brilliant expedient of hiring a brand-new hut from a Kaffir headman. It was very clean and warm. Our rent was a pound of sugar. In the evening our landlord visited us with some friends, and a warrior gave us a splendid and frenzied war dance. We ordered "chuda," Kaffir beer, to be brought, and an hour was passed very merrily. They were like children, and a few simple conjuring tricks greatly mystified them.





THE KAFFIR BOY AND HIS FRIENDS.



"THE COOKHOUSE DOOR."

*To face page 435.*

## CHAPTER XLIII

### FOURIESBURG AND SURRENDER HILL AGAIN

WALLIS had us wakened early at our Kaffir hut and told us to pack our kits which he would send across the river in his Cape cart. We crossed over and found ourselves in the 34th lines by nine o'clock. The Brigade was ready for a trek, and at 9.45 we all started towards Fouriesburg. We marched in column of fours, for all the heights overlooking Bester's Vlei were held by General Rundle's men. We arrived at Fouriesburg at noon, and camped east of the town. The watering-place, at the bottom of a deep gorge, was very difficult of access, and the water became unfit for the horses. I had been unable to see the comet since the 22nd.

1901.  
May 26.  
Sunday.

Stable and grazing guards. In the afternoon it rained, with considerable thunder.

May 27.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

In the evening we received orders to strike tents and bivouacs, and to give them up with all kit valises and superfluous articles.\* They were to be packed on a waggon ready to go out with Campbell's Brigade to Bethlehem on the morrow.

Nigel Walker and Christy were placed in charge of the kit waggon for Bethlehem.

Baker was undergoing punishment for refusing to water a sergeant's horse. Thirty-fourth firing-line was thin enough, without resorting to such nonsense to obtain

\* We were never to see our kits again, and we lost many valuables and treasured little mementoes owing to the unscrupulous way in which the kits were dealt with on their arrival at Harrismith.



still further depletion. A sergeant is allowed one "batman," who is excused guards and fatigues, and it is absurd that a non-com. should be allowed, as custom allows him, to add personal services to the duties of the already overburdened men of the firing-line.

I was night stable guard with Fowler and E. V. Wilshin.

May 28.  
Reveille  
5.30 a.m.

It rained heavily during the night, and we were allowed to retain our bivouacs and tents until the very early morning, when we packed them on the outgoing waggon.

Thirty-fourth were ordered, with other Companies, to saddle and to be ready to help guard General Campbell's Column on its way out towards Retief's Nek, on the Bethlehem Road. Thirty-fourth were divided, for rear guard, into two lots—one under Agnew, the other under Hall. Barrington acted as connecting-link with the column. I was with Hall's lot. Five miles or so out a lively sniping began, and the Artillery was kept busy. At this point the road passed under the west (the left) end of a big berg, about a mile and a half or two miles long. Thirty-fourth were acting as a rear screen to a fifteen-pounder and the pom-pom, and altogether we were, practically, the rear guard of a rear guard. Barrington was now instructed to take a high kopje two miles to the right of the road, and to the right, or at the east end, of the big berg; the guns remained on the road to the left of the berg. Something very mysterious now occurred. Although the berg had been traversed by succeeding flank guards of Campbell's Column, and to gain our kopje on the right we had galloped along, under it, without being molested, yet from somewhere in the heights of the berg a busy sniping was directed upon our two guns, and two or three men were wounded and put out of action. Immediately afterwards three or four shots whizzed into us, narrowly missing Fowler and Roberts. Our fifteen-pounder fired a few shells and the sniping ceased, yet no one left the berg, for that we were in a position to observe. Presently





OVER THE RIDGE.



LANDSCAPE ADVERTISING, NEAR RIETIEF'S NEK.

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we galloped into the road to our guns, and then we were informed that we must again take the kopje. We wheeled about and did it in such quick time that the Pom-pom Section, not realising that it was 34th men on the kopje, and taking us for Boers, turned the pom-pom on us and fired twenty-five shells into us. By great good luck no one was hurt, but the shells passed and exploded so close to some of us as to scatter dirt and chips of stone over two or three of our men. We were all rather startled at this rather superfluous compliment, and we waved frantically lest it should be repeated. I had a *Times Weekly* in my pocket and I opened it and waved it energetically. Our fellows fired a terrible volley of oaths at the pom-pom and all belonging to it, but in spite of our superior range—an elegant range—we did not notice that we caused many casualties! Presently the column ahead was out of sight and our guns turned about to retire on Fouriesburg. We descended our kopje, and then found that one of our two attached men had fallen asleep on the top, and we had to halt till he was hauled down. Our tempers by this time were sorely tried, nor were they soothed by the fact that before we had reached a position near the guns the saucy ping-pong! or tok-kok! of a sniper sounded in our rear. We returned to Fouriesburg to find that our camp had been changed to a point south of the town.

The Company were now without shelter. The wind rose to a very stormy pitch, and by noon a great dust cloud enveloped the whole great basin below us. The high bergs about us were all picketed. At one post an imitation fifteen-pounder had been constructed, trench and all complete. Small patrols were sent out last night and to-day, but no Boers were surprised by them. Veldt fires were beginning again, and last night along the Wittebergen slopes the scene was the familiar one of last winter.

In the morning Ralli took six of us out on an armed and mounted wood fatigue. We chopped down some old

May 22.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

willow trees and brought in a waggon-load of good fire-wood.

May 30.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

The morning broke exquisitely clear and calm, but before sunrise it was bitterly cold. The wind had effectually cleared the air.

A list, said to be for embarkation orders, was taken of those wishing to go home.

Adjutant Dixon came into the lines with a heliogram to say that Bradley was so dangerously ill that his recovery was not expected.

Mustchin, General Rundle's orderly and an old 34th man, came over to say that we should trek in the morning. We accordingly made preparations.

May 31.  
Reveille  
2.15 a.m.

Almost all the night the camp was brilliant with the big fires kept alight; economy in fuel was known to be no object.

We were said to number from two to three thousand troops in this portion of the Division.

We started at 4.45 a.m. We rode out in the dark and the frost. The cold to our feet and hands was biting. The advance and rear guards were large, for we were going down the great basin towards Surrender Hill, where innumerable positions favour sniping and ambush. Thirty-fourth were right flank guard, but as the Infantry flanking parties were numerous we had not much to do, nor did the enemy for some time molest us much all along the line. I was one of six under Agnew in the rear flank guard. Fouriesburg was evacuated, and we were told that not a family remained in the town. Before noon the cow-guns and fifteen-pounders were occasionally heard in the advance. We had passed the Mill, and the ridge where our little party under Palmer had been hung up on February 20th, and the conical kopje, the bends in the river and spruit—every feature was indelibly printed on my memory!

To the north-east, in the distance, we heard the heavy cannonading of another Column, which was said to be Campbell's Brigade.





THE "COW" GUN ON THE ROAD.



THE "COW" GUN (5-INCH) IN ACTION.





About eleven a.m. we had passed old Schoenseg Kopje, every yard was full of memories now—and by noon had arrived at Surrender Hill. Here we made a halt for a couple of hours, for rest and food.

The advance pickets reported the enemy in the front, and some of the Artillery went up to the heights to give them a pounding. General Rundle himself went forward to take a look at the lie of the country and the positions. A large body of mounted men was assembled, and a long line of advance scouts was sent forward to draw the fire of the enemy. We had halted almost upon the great heaps of burnt ammunition and destroyed arms, relics of Prinsloo's surrender. The men raked over the tens of thousands of bullets, and by way of souvenirs picked out a great number of soft-nosed, split-nosed, and dum-dum bullets.

The advanced scouts were fired upon at long range, but the enemy did not stand, and we saw the Boers uttering away on the further ridges like rabbits. General Rundle then sent the other Companies forward at a gallop, and presently, on the road, the fresh ruts of empty waggons were observed. Thirty-fourth were ordered to try to catch them, and we raced along far in front for some miles until we reached the edge of the Walker's Farm basin, but we saw nothing of the waggons ahead, nor did the enemy put in an appearance. We halted and remained as a sort of advance outpost until after sunset, and then we learnt that camp had been pitched two miles in the rear and we trotted home.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### NAAUWPOORT NEK AND GOLDEN GATE

1901.  
June 1.  
Reveille  
8.15 a.m.

THE Imperial Yeomanry, under Colonel Firman, rode out before dawn by moonlight and down into the Walker's Farm amphitheatre.\* We moved down in silence, and no smoking was allowed. We halted near the farm to give the Infantry a chance to come forward to occupy the high ranges in front. Six men under Barrington rode on to visit a farm. They found the owner, an Englishman named Pratt, up, and baking a batch of bread, 5 o'clock in the morning! He was made a prisoner and brought into Walker's Farm, but upon his showing a pass and a permit to own a rifle—the rifle was produced, and the state of it showed that it had not been used for a long time—he was released. As soon as broad daylight came we passed on through the gorge to the road approaching Naauwpoort Nek, and after proceeding a couple of miles we could see that General Campbell's pickets held the bastions on either side of the Nek. We had been told to look out for them, and to be very careful on whom we fired. Campbell's Brigade then had, since they left Fouriesburg, been to Bethlehem and had slipped back to occupy Naauwpoort Nek. We trotted on in close order with the Colonel leading. At Forbes' Stores, in the pass, we met a party of Manchester Mounted Infantry under young Thorneycroft. We rode through the Nek, and on the outside we found General Campbell's camp. Along the road we had still seen the

\* See August 4, 1900.

waggon tracks which we had followed the previous evening, and now we learnt that eleven waggons with Boer families had yesterday been captured. We halted long enough to get a mouthful to eat and to compare notes with the Glamorgans. Their Brigade had had severe fighting through Retief's Nek, and had suffered some casualties. They had killed several Boers, and had come upon their graves, which had been so hastily dug that some of the bodies were not completely covered. General Campbell presently rode back with us as far as Forbes' Stores in the pass, where we again halted while he wrote reports or despatches in his pocket-book. Our horses got a good feed of oat hay here. After a delay of an hour 34th and 35th cantered back to Walker's Farm Basin. I was one of the left flank guard under Roberts. We found the battalion Convoy at Walker's Farm, and we camped, and for the rest of the day there was little done. General Rundle and the main body remained at or near the camp of last night. I was on night guard. Our kits had been left with Corporal Nigel Walker and Christy at Bethlehem.

Walker's Farm Basin is a very rugged and picturesque locality. It is, so to speak, Nature's vestibule to the Naauppoort Nek approach. At first sight it seems to be a flat depression entirely surrounded by almost precipitous bergs three or four hundred feet high; it is really a cañon with a stream winding through it. Its principal oddity is a balanced boulder poised on a stem of rock, which resembles a gigantic mushroom set above the high skyline.

The people at the farm were English, and they had in pickle large stores of new bacon and ham. It would be difficult to say for what market this had been intended, but the Imperial Yeomany bought some of it. I cannot say if the store was commandeered or not; it certainly ought to have been.

Three companies of mounted men under Colonel Firman rode back to meet the advance guard of General

June 2.  
Bevillie 5 a.m.  
Sunday.

Rundle. Thirty-fifth did picket duty and 34th returned to Walker's Farm. Thirty-fifth did not return, but were ordered to join Colonel Kent's Column, which was operating on the right flank.

It was a very cold and windy night last night, and a fine snow fell.

General Rundle, with his Staff, passed our camp on towards the Nek and returned later in the day. Few of the enemy were seen; only a few cannon shots were fired all day. The road we had followed from Fouriesburg to Naauwpoort Nek was the same as that our party under Sergeant Green had followed last August.

June 3.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

Last night there was an intensely hard frost. The margins of the running stream were frozen, and large icicles were formed on the dripping banks. Colonel Firman took three companies of Imperial Yeomanry through the Walker's Farm gorge into the open country beyond, and turned to the right towards the rugged Golden Gate country. Golden Gate is another pass through the mountain barriers lying south or south-east of the Naauwpoort Nek pass, but a very much more rugged, difficult, and picturesque one. None of our columns had ever attempted to pierce it, and even the Boers, when they had transport with them, fought shy of this difficult and dangerous road. General Rundle decided to march through and to sweep up such stock and grain as we came upon.

Colonel Firman directed 34th to take the left flank guard along the foot of the mountain ridges these passes pierce. After a while the whole Division swung out of Walker's Farm Basin and followed us. A party of Infantry climbed the ridges to our left rear. Fifty-third was advance guard, and came into touch with the enemy, and under a heavy fire took cover in a kraal. The Artillery came up and shelled the enemy in various positions in the mountains on either hand. About eleven o'clock Major Percival (Artillery) asked for two men of the 34th to go up to the left heights with an order for the



Infantry to press forward. Shafer, one of our attached men, and I were chosen, and we had a climb of over a thousand feet. I arrived on top first and signalled the Infantry in the rear to come forward, and I gave them the message of the Major. Three or four miles further out, across a gorge, I saw some herders driving off over five hundred sheep. I could only report this to my officer later. We descended and caught up our Company, and after a little skirmishing we all camped at four o'clock at Van Lyl's Farm, about eight miles east or south-east of Naauwpoort Nek, and half-way to the Golden Gate.

Thirty-fourth, under Barrington, were ordered to ride out to a hoek on our right rear to burn some grain at a farm. Infantry pickets dotted the ridges around the camp.

About a hundred and fifty Boers were known to be in the neighbourhood, but the hills were so vast and the hoeks so many that an enemy without encumbrance, or few in number, could double back in a score of ways.

Thirty-fourth, after an hour's work in the rear, were ordered to a position on the left, a mile beyond Van Lyl's Farm. Here we off-saddled for an hour or two and set a picket. I was one of the grazing guards. Firing had begun at our rear, and farther on to the left; it was soon silenced, but not before our Infantry in the rear had sustained one or two casualties. An order came suddenly for us to saddle and join Colonel Firman in front and we made a mad gallop along the flank of the huge column, and with other Imperial Yeomanry we galloped on for four miles or so through the magnificent cañon or gorge of the Golden Gate. It was a memorable ride in remarkable surroundings—the road was rough, as one might expect among such a disordered mass of grandeur. Cliffs, boulders, rocks—pink, white, and brown—dark green mountains and hoeks and a blazing blue sky were elements enough to form an impressive scene though it all passed so swiftly by us. Nor did we know if the impressions being recorded in our minds were to be punctuated by the Mauser crack. At the Golden Gate

June 4.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

Farm, before we had caught up Colonel Firman, a Staff Officer ordered us to return to the Column, and, "files about," we were riding back when we met General Rundle and his Staff. We brought our rifles to the carry. Colonel Blair halted us and inquired of Barrington who and what we were and where we were going. Barrington explained the situation, and that we were the 34th Company. Blair asked, "But where are the rest of you? You are not a squadron!" Barrington answered quickly, "We were once, sir!" It was a simple, gentle answer, quite unpremeditated, but it hit the mark squarely. It meant so much to us—the little remnant of less than twenty men—the whole history of a strenuous year. Even the General smiled and gave orders for us to go and join our Colonel. Again we galloped back and caught up Firman and soon emerged beyond the pass, when the tremendous country towards Bethlehem and Harrismith unfolded itself far below us. The Colonel set us as an outpost on a high hill to the south of the road debouching from the pass, where we stayed all the afternoon. Barrington, Hall, Agnew, and Wallis were all with us. Later in the afternoon Colonel Firman, from below, set the heliograph at us, and Hall, a good hand at signalling, read the message and replied by wagging a handkerchief. The Colonel told us, "that the General required us to stay out all night on the top of the kopje"—we groaned, for we had neither food nor covering—"but, taking one consideration with another, we might build a sangar, make some dummies, and descend, and he would send a picket to another point later on; we were not to quit our post until after dark." We recovered our cheerfulness and amused ourselves by making most elaborate dummies. Richards and one or two others, who had been permitted to visit a farm some way below our post, had brought up one or two old elephant guns of ancient muzzle-loading pattern, and these we put on our dummy sentries at the shoulder. Phillips had brought back a nice chicken for me—there were enough fowls and to spare for all.

Thirty-fourth came into camp below so late that we were not put on picket duty, but three of us, under Corporal Phillips, were warned for a picket relief for 5 a.m., which meant our rising at about 3.30 a.m. Richards, who had been stable guard on the third watch, had very thoughtfully cooked us a good hot breakfast of mutton chops and coffee, for which we were most grateful, for food just then was our prime necessity.

Before the break of day I found myself on first "sentry-go" on the side of a little kopje east of the Golden Gate cañon outlet. Immense hills, crags and cliffs rose around us to the west, south, and part of the east. The ridges were lower on the north-east and they sloped up to the heights on the north side of the Golden Gate. I was keeping a sharp-look out, for the country was of a sort that admitted of easy surprises. At the very earliest streak of dawn, before the approach of light, I observed objects moving on the north-eastern skyline. I called the corporal and, as the light increased, we made out half a dozen Boers riding slowly up to the northern heights. They were all leading packed horses. They were out of range, and there was a probability of their being only a few of many. We sent to Lieutenant Barrington to report the matter, and he told the Colonel, who caused an Infantry picket to be despatched to the summit at once. We watched, in the daylight, the picket climbing to the position. It was an hour before they had reached it and, just as we had expected, a sound of sniping began as soon as they came upon the skyline. We saw them all drop or run for cover, and there was soon a brisk exchange of morning salutations going on. Our men now advanced on the enemy and drove them away. The Infantry suffered one casualty. We were watching this little skirmish from over one thousand feet below. It is probable that the Boers had intended to creep forward to snipe the camp. This picket established, there was no further need of our own, and

June 5.



we presently received orders to join the Battalion, which was paraded for a reconnoitring expedition.

Thirty-fourth became advance guard, and Colonel Firman sent out six advance scouts under Edmondston. We proceeded along a succession of great kopje ridges which formed a tableland to lower levels, until we had reached four or five miles from camp in a north-easterly direction. Much of this tableland was covered with scattered groups of native rhododendron bushes, such as we had never seen before in all our treks. Edmondston sent in three times to say that he could see bodies of the enemy to our right front, but the Colonel sent back word to say he was to push on and to keep a look-out for General Campbell's troops, who were in the neighbourhood. It was soon apparent that the enemy held ridges to the front, and 34th were ordered to extend and advance. The ground was broken and irregular, and Barrington first led us to a round headland overlooking a valley or deep depression. From this point we made a difficult descent to the lower level of the basin and began to gallop across it to the opposite ridges a mile distant. We got about half-way across it when we saw to our left, about six to eight hundred yards distant, and a little beyond the point at which we had descended, some men driving a lot of cattle over the ridge. They were hastening as if in a hurry to get out of sight. We even halted and looked at them through our glasses, but Barrington forbade us to dismount and fire because he not only thought they might be Campbell's men, but he wished to occupy an elevated position without delay. As we galloped on we saw the 53rd Company extend and pass by the headland at which we had swerved and continue along the heights for two or three hundred yards to another and smaller headland or prominence when, at less than fifty paces, they were met by a volley from the enemy hidden among rocks. We saw five or six of the 53rd fall and the rest gallop for cover. A few of them had arrived so close to the concealed enemy that they dismounted and actually took

cover among rocks which were affording the Boers a hiding-place. The enemy then turned a volley upon us, as we were concluding our gallop to the position which Barrington had indicated to us. The range at which we received their fire was quite one thousand yards, and we were travelling at fair pace, and none of us was touched. The Companies in rear—the 35th and Manchester Mounted Infantry—had at once dismounted and poured in a terrible fire into the Boer position, and made it so hot for the enemy that they soon mounted and made off, north-east, sheltered by a fall of the ground.

Thirty-fourth fully realised that its little remnant had had a narrow escape. Had we been fired upon during our slow descent we must inevitably have been wiped out, and we could only account for the Boer restraint by imagining that they desired, before they disclosed themselves, that their cattle should reach cover.

Our Company had to remain in the position they occupied, which was on the right front, for many hours, and though we could observe, across the valley, that 53rd had suffered, we did not know the particulars of the casualties until toward evening. Back by the Golden Gate we could see the antlike movement of transport as it debouched slowly from the pass. To our front we watched one or two groups of ostriches roaming about in the adjacent valleys.

It was getting late in the day when an orderly came across to tell us that Colonel Firman wanted us. Barrington had already ridden over for orders. We questioned the messenger eagerly, and he told us that of the 53rd Parrish had been shot through the heart, R. Bell through the right lung; Sergeant Harding had been shot in the left knee.

Hall led us to the Colonel. On our way one of the 53rd boys galloped down upon us and breathlessly asked us if any of us had brandy, and told us that Harding had fainted and was perhaps dying. We now learnt that only the wound in his knee had been discovered by his



comrades, and it had been concluded that the bullet had lodged in the leg. For hours he had talked cheerfully with those about him, and all the while he was bleeding to death from the outlet of the wound in his back, the blood soaking into the earth, for the bullet had travelled up and out at his back. At the last he said he felt a bit sleepy and then, without any symptom of pain, he died.

There was no doctor with us, nor did any come out from camp, although a message or messenger was sent for one. Some excuse about barbed wire fences was given for this neglect. Camp was hardly more than four miles off, and these men lay for six hours without medical attention. The men of the Battalion were deeply angered over this.

At dusk we escorted the Colonel to camp and came in rather late. Half-way in we ran across some stretcher-bearers in the dark, and they asked us if they were on the right road. In a field we found a lot of cocked "cat hay," and, determining that our horses should have a good feed that night, we each carried three or four bundles before us on the saddle bow.

We heard that several horses had been killed, and that a man named Geo. Neile, when his horse was killed under him, had fallen into a deep rut, and although, as he lay there, he was shot at many times at close range he was not hurt. Lieutenant Thorold had got within ten yards of the Boer firing-line and had dropped unharmed among the rocks.

June 6.

I was for night guard, and as there were no biscuits going I took the opportunity to make my ration flour into a suet dumpling, and boiled it in my iron billy. I got very little sleep.

At daybreak we could see that the camp had hardly advanced two miles from where we had camped the previous night.

The Infantry worked at the road all the night, trying to smooth the inequalities and rounding off and banking up the dangerous turns of the zig-zag down.

We fell in very early in the morning to attend the funeral of our comrades. A very pretty spot had been selected in a group of rhododendrons. When we arrived the fatigue party reported that bed rock had been struck at a depth of about two feet. Colonel Firman ordered that fresh graves be dug, somewhere where the soil was deeper, and a burial party was at once told off for the duty. We silently filed by the ambulance to our lines and fell in for parade.

It was seen that the Column could not move far that day. They would be fortunate if they all reached safely by nightfall the more level ground, five hundred feet below. The duty of the mounted men was to occupy positions covering the advance. To-day, however, the pom-pom and Maxim were to accompany us. Thirty-fourth were made pom-pom guard, and with very little opposition we arrived at and held a ridge a mile and a half beyond the one we held yesterday. Other Companies took up similar positions around us. We practically constituted a line of pickets in defence of the descending Column.

It was a quiet day, and a few men were allowed to go foraging at one or two farms near by. Heenan returned with a sack of fine oats, which was a most welcome find, for our horses had officially been on short rations for several days. The pom-pom shelled some moving objects on a high, grass-covered kopje. We could not be sure if they were grazing horses or a band of the enemy. The shells set fire to the grass, and by evening almost the whole kopje was black against the sky. Phillips made a big pot of tea for a select few of us. Phillips knew all about tea, he had been a planter, and if he planted it with the success with which he brewed it he should have made a fortune.

It was about four o'clock when we returned to an unhappy camp, pitched on the flat at the foot of the great zigzag. Half-way down our waggon had toppled over, and now such belongings as we had with us were



to seek. Some of them had been brought in and had lain scattered about when the grass of the flat had caught fire and swept over everything. A few lost most of their possessions. Adjutant Dixon and Lieutenant Barrington were the chief sufferers. I was glad my Kaffir boy had elected to follow me on this trek. I found him sitting, with a happy sort of smile on his face, by my blankets and things; by hook or by crook he had pulled them through the day's troubles—all but my invaluable iron billy, that was crushed under the falling waggon! The officers' Cape cart with kit and souvenirs was entirely destroyed.

The cow-gun had also come to grief—one of its wheels had smashed. Lieutenant Evans, of the 34th Gun Section, went to work and constructed almost a new wheel out of a broken waggon. Five or six new spokes had to be made, with only a big axe by way of tools. He made a very workmanlike job, and the gun was finally brought down in triumph.

After dark another grass fire sprang up, and we were ordered out to fight it with sacks or anything else that came handy.

We had only moved two miles to-day.

There were no parade orders in the morning, but immediately after breakfast twelve men were ordered from 34th to act as scouts or escort to two officers who were going down the road towards Ross's Ostrich Farm. We joined them at ten o'clock and found them with a small Infantry escort awaiting our arrival. We opened out and scouted in advance towards the ridge where the 53rd had been surprised. Earlier in the morning and last night the little eminence had been shelled by the fifteen-pounder, and some Boers had been cleared out each time. A good deal of sniping was going on to our left, but not at us; it was our picket that was being annoyed, and one of its members was badly wounded. Our own advance scouts, at the direction of the officers, rode up close to the offending ridges to the right, but not

June 7.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.



A WHEEL OF THE "COW" GUN, REPAIRED BY J. B. EVANS.



MICK: COMRADE AND VETERAN.

*To face page 470.*





a shot was fired at us. The officers then inspected the road to the farm and we were recalled. At the back or east of the farmstead was a narrow neck, through which our future road lay, and the heights on the left side of it were a part and continuation of the tableland from which those headlands of which I spoke in regard to the unlucky operations of June 5th rose.

Upon our return to camp we received starting orders for 2.30 p.m. Camp was to be moved to beyond the ostrich farm, but not more than two and a half miles eastward. Thirty-fourth were escort to the Colonel, and we had very little to do except to explore the farm, which was deserted. There was a great deal of good forage there and we gave our horses a feast. There were also many young pigs about, which afforded some exciting sport not only to onlookers, but to those hunters who were fond of succulent pork. What was still more interesting was that smashed rifles, relics from the rubbish heaps of Surrender Hill, had been brought here, and a forge erected, to reconstruct from various unbroken parts some rifles that, if they could not be called new, were perhaps serviceable weapons.

The Nek was not traversed without a little resistance on the part of the ubiquitous sniper, but there were no casualties.

Six men under Corporal Ralli were sent back as escort to a waggon which was required at a farm in the right rear. Ralli found, above the farm and hidden under a ledge of rock, thirty-six sacks of oats of the very best and freshest quality. We all went into camp at four o'clock. As the Nek was very short the camp was disposed on either side of it. The I.Y. lines were on the east or further side.

Thirty-fourth were rear guard and, contrary to the general rule, we had, as rear guard, to be the first about. We packed up and breakfasted by moonlight, and at dawn we trotted back through the Nek with the M.M.I. and disposed ourselves in the rear, almost on the very ridge we had

June 8.  
Reveille 6 a.m.

occupied all day of the 5th of June, when we had looked on at the skirmish of the 53rd. We stayed here for over two hours watching the camp dissolve and keeping a look-out for the lurking sniper. The farm was below us and about it many forage heaps were ablaze.

Meat rations had lately been plentiful on account of the great number of cattle and sheep that the Column had collected. This particular district had hardly been disturbed during the war, and plenty of stock, horses, forage, and grain was to be found at every farmstead. Far off in the recesses of the mountains we had observed large flocks of sheep being driven off, in heights that were impracticable except to specially equipped and appointed expeditions, and it made one realise the enormous magnitude of the task of clearing such a country. We destroyed, by burning, immense stores of forage and grain. Our horses were first well provided for. Of poultry there was plenty, but of breadstuff for ourselves there was but the two biscuits and the half ration of flour daily.

Although the Infantry had not had long marches to do, they had experienced a very hard time, on picket duties, on the summits of great bergs and ridges.

We heard with much pleasure that Bell, the 53rd man who had been shot through the lung, was getting on as well as could be expected.

The last of the camp had hardly cleared when we heard the Boers open fire from the cliffs that overlooked the road from the left. For an hour there was a duel between the sniper in force and a fifteen-pounder and a pom-pom. For some minutes the enemy poured a hot fire into a portion of the Convoy. The 53rd, who were the left flank guard, ran right into the zone of danger, and before cover was found three or four of their horses were wounded and killed. Several oxen were also killed. Heenan, who was ill and whose wound was troubling him, was with the Convoy, and he told me that he saw a Kaffir driver receive a shot through his shoulder, but that

the boy took no notice of his hurt until he had whipped up his oxen to cover, although the wound was a severe one, made either by a Martini or soft-nosed bullet.

Thirty-fourth galloped through the Nek and on to the first sky-line and came into view of the fifteen-pounder shelling the heights. The Boers had such good cover that they could not be dislodged. As the gun went forward we followed, and in our turn we came under fire, the bullets knocking up dust all about us. Barrington and Richards had several about their horses' feet. After we had passed these cliffs the country became open veldt land; the road took us eastward towards Harrismith and away from the great ranges of hills, in the heart of which we had fought and wandered for the last two weeks. We soon viewed ahead of us the familiar forms of Paul's Rock and Platberg, and soon after midday we arrived at one of the Eland's River drifts. We found General Campbell's Brigade camped on the east side of the river. After watering our horses we went into camp on the west side, not far from General Rundle's headquarters.

Reveille was nominally at 4.30 a.m., but the Division time was put on and we went out by the light of the moon much earlier. Thirty-fourth with the M.M.I. were right rear flank guard. The Convoy made rapid progress on the Harrismith road. The country was burnt black the whole distance, and as far around as the eye could reach. We did not see a sign of the enemy. We arrived at Harrismith at 2 p.m., and camped near the old camping-grounds west of the town. Since we were there before the defences had been much strengthened by blockhouses and entanglements. There were strong rumours that we had made our last trek. I was night stable guard with Weisberg and Wilshin.

The roll call of those who came in on our last march from Elands River Drift to Harrismith was as follows :—

Lieutenant Barrington.	Cowan.	Edmondston.
„ Hall.	Clifford.	Edwards.
„ Agnew.	Corner.	Fowler.

June 9.  
Reveille  
4.30 a.m.  
Sunday.

## 474 THE STORY OF THE 34TH COMPANY, I. Y.

Heenan.	Ralli.	GUN SECTION.
Kelsey.	Roberts.	Lieutenant Evans.
Marriott.	Weisberg.	Campbell.
Paparritor.	Wilshin, T. J.	Hunt.
Phillips.	Wilshin, E. V.	
Richards.		

Seventeen of whom rode in the firing line.

Two attached men—Shafer, Evans.

Three attached servants.

### SPECIAL DIVISIONAL ORDERS BY LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR LESLIE RUNDLE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., COMMANDING 8TH DIVISION.

HARRISMITH,

9th June, 1901.

1. Sir Leslie Rundle has great satisfaction in publishing to the Troops under his Command the following extract from a telegram addressed to him by Lord Kitchener:—

Extract begins: "Very glad to hear of success of your combined movements. [*Stop.*] This good work is all the more creditable in such difficult country and with such trying weather." Extract ends.

2. The Lieut.-General Commanding appoints Lieut.-Colonel L. E. Kiggell, Assistant Adjutant General, to be Chief Staff Officer to the Division from this date.

By Order,

(Sd.) L. E. KIGGELL, Lieut.-Colonel,  
Chief Staff Officer,  
8th Division.



## CHAPTER XLV

### HARRISMITH TO CAPE TOWN

"The longest way round is the shortest way home."

STABLES and watering. I drew a pass to town and walked in with Ralli, who had obtained furlough and was going home by private passage. I found that privates without specially endorsed passes were refused lunch at the hotel. Meeting Agnew he at once endorsed my pass "for lunch," and several of us once more enjoyed a decent meal. We bought a lot of new clothes and some groceries.

1901.  
June 10.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.

The very sad news of Bradley's death at Ficksburg, on May 31st, was given us in the afternoon. Until his illness he had ridden during our whole campaign in the firing line.

There was now no doubt of the fact that our Battalion was ordered home. Our saddlery was "given in" to-day. There were promotions for those who had decided to remain at the front—Sergeant-Major Cowan to Regimental-Sergeant-Major, Edwards to Saddler-Sergeant, Clifford to Quarter-Master-Sergeant, Fowler to Quarter-Master-Sergeant, Phillips to Sergeant, and Paparritor was to get a berth in a Colonial corps.

Every one was eager and excited about the home-going. We were to give up our horses. I was sorrowful about my good, faithful pony Prinsloo; he was likely to go to the M.M.I., but I was soon tremendously relieved to find that Lieutenant Hall had taken a fancy to him, and was

June 11.  
Reveille  
6.30 a.m.



pleased to see him led to the officers' line. I knew he would be well taken care of by his new master. Agnew and Hall were "staying out." My horse and I had been good friends and comrades. He was as faithful, willing, and good-tempered a little horse as ever carried a man.

At 6.30 we all fell in for a dinner at the Central Hotel, a farewell feast. Lieut. Barrington took the chair, Hall was vice-chairman. There was much good singing and wine going. It was voted a great success. We broke up at eleven. Dinner was provided for thirty officers and men, including eight guests.

June 12.

Jacoby and Meikle, from hospital, had awaited our arrival at Harrismith. Hayward, another 34th man who had been away on orderly and police duty since the Klip Nek days, rejoined us to go home with us.

June 13.  
Reveille 5 a.m.

A frosty morning. There were parade orders for 9 a.m. Kits were to be loaded on a waggon, lines to be cleaned and tidied, and we were to fall in with rifle and bandolier.

We got a great "send off!" thirty-fourth, 35th, 36th, and 53rd, marched past the Division lines by companies in columns of four. Every one was out to cheer us.

We formed in line at 10.30 outside the Harrismith Railway Station under Colonel Firman. Colonel Harley was present. We awaited General Rundle. On his arrival with his Staff we were ordered to form in three sides of a square. The General made an eloquent little speech, complimenting the 11th and 14th Battalions on their willing and gallant work. He especially mentioned the 34th Company in connection with Major Dalbiac and Lieut. Roller. With some feeling he said that, in a sense, he could not regret the death of Dalbiac inasmuch as that brave man had set an example of such import to the Imperial Yeomanry at the beginning of their active service—an example the men had striven to honour.

We cheered the General, and he desired us to march past him into the station.



**HERMAN MAITLAND AGNEW, D.C.M.**  
Killed in Action, December 25, 1901.



**S. E. HALL.**  
Killed in Action, December 25, 1901.

*To face page 476.*

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

2. The second part is a list of the names and addresses of the members of the committee.

3. The third part is a list of the names and addresses of the members of the committee.

4. The fourth part is a list of the names and addresses of the members of the committee.

5. The fifth part is a list of the names and addresses of the members of the committee.

6. The sixth part is a list of the names and addresses of the members of the committee.

7. The seventh part is a list of the names and addresses of the members of the committee.

We entrained amid much cheering and the leave-taking of a few good comrades who had elected to stay behind.

Our campaigning was done with.

In lovely weather we steamed slowly up to Albertina, through Van Reenan's Pass, and down, down the great loops and zigzags into Natal. We saw the landmarks which stood for so much in the minds of Englishmen in the story of this great struggle in South Africa—Spion Kop, Nicholson's Nek, and many others. Ladysmith was reached by sunset, and Bulwana Hill and Wagon Hill were pointed out to us as they will be pointed out to many generations to come.

We stayed in Ladysmith for five or six hours; we got a good dinner there, and then we continued our journey by night, northward.

Sunrise found us at Hatting Station, where we breakfasted. We went on our way at 10.30 a.m., past Newcastle, up the mountains once more, with interminable loops and zigzags, on past Colley's grave with its lone tree upon the ridge, up to Majuba Hill and through Laing's Nek. We gazed in silence at the grim hill whose name had become so powerful a symbol in the minds of Englishmen. We noted many graves both old and new. There were grass fires above and below. It was dusk by the time we reached Volksrust. We slept on the platform of the station.

June 14.

We got away in a hurry, without breakfast, and it was not long before the 36th missed Mick the dog. Captain Pott, who commanded that Company, was much distressed, and wired back to offer the railway-guards handsome rewards if they would bring him on.\*

June 15.  
Reveille 4 a.m.

We passed through Standerton, one vast camp, to Elandsfontein, where we remained the night and where Paparritor left us to join the Police.

\* Captain Bertram Pott, of Bentham Hill, Tunbridge Wells, has given our old friend Mick the comfortable home he deserves. I am informed: "Mick is going strong, and wears a beautiful collar studded with Mauser bullets, and with his history on it."

June 16.  
Sunday.

We were travelling in open goods trucks.

Our train steamed out of Elandsfontein at the first appearance of dawn. We crossed the Vaal River southward to Vereeniging and on to Kroonstad, at which place we arrived at 4 p.m. We had to wait here for Lord Kitchener's special train to pass ours. The Commander-in-Chief was received on the platform by General Knox. Lord Kitchener looked his every inch—and they are many—the great commander that he is—large and powerful in frame as well as mind. He acknowledged our salutes with an air of great good nature.

Blockhouses had been erected, and were being erected all along the line.

June 17.

We were to have left Kroonstad very early but were delayed until 8 a.m. Fifty-eight newly captured prisoners were to go down on our train, and we had to furnish armed guards. The prisoners for the most part were of a very miserable type, much inferior to any I had come into contact with before. Forty of them were Transvaalers, and they looked like poor specimens of Georgia Crackers. I offered a little group of them some of my rations and a biscuit or two. They refused, saying quite contentedly, "Oh, we get plenty to eat." This was a new state of affairs to us men of the "Starving Eighth," amongst whom the "loan" of a biscuit was considered somewhat of a sacrifice.

This is the kind of Notice Boards we found at most of the stations:—

"The Refreshment Room and Bar are out of bounds to all N.C.O.'s and men.

By order, G.O.C.

This refers to Yeomanry, Volunteers, and Colonial Corps as well as to Regulars.

Kroonstad.

By order, R.S.C."

At sunset we reached Bloemfontein, and we were allowed to go into the town to get something to eat. "Your town is very quiet," I said to an M. P., who was also an Irishman. He put the back of his hand to his



mouth and loudly whispered, "Ah thin, the Commandther-in-Chief is in town, and they've all gone home with their little bottle to-night!"

Our truck was so crowded that three or four of us June 18. slept on the ground, and while we slept a shunting engine took our train away. At first we thought we were left behind, but a yard hand told us the train had stopped for orders at the main station, a mile beyond. We commandeered a wheelbarrow and hastily packed our blankets upon it and started off at a great pace down the line. We found our train and got aboard; it did not start for two hours afterwards.

To-day we passed many places we remembered from our march, last year, on the way to the front.

By dark we crossed over the Orange River into Norval's Pont. We were in Cape Colony. What months of crowded experiences were behind us!

There was a night journey to Naauwpoort, and a halt June 19. at that place. Then we went on to De Aar, arriving there at sundown.

Mick, our truant dog, was sent on to us and arrived to-day.

We were not allowed to go out of the station last night, June 20. and all day we waited impatiently for orders. Notices were up naming restrictions as to Refreshment Room and Bar, and these were a source of much grumbling among the men. It would not have been so if the officers and military police had refrained from airing their own privileges before hungry and thirsty men just in from the front. Some of the Colonials resented it so hotly that they smashed a window over the matter.

The remnant of the Battalion, since our departure from Harrismith, had been under the command of Captain-Adjutant Dixon as next in command after Colonel Firman.

Late in the afternoon we were ordered to go into camp on the dusty plain to the east of De Aar station. Many of the new troops were camping there and learning their

duties. Some men of our Battalion were warned for outpost duty, upon which there was almost open mutiny. They felt that they should be no longer liable to do duties of that kind, especially in a standing base camp that had its own routine.

June 21. The new Yeomanry held a sing-song round a huge bonfire. It was a very dismal affair.

June 22. De Aar Junction Camp. Little to do but to await orders with what patience we could command.

There was heavy rain and thunder during the night and some of us got wet. This place is a base of importance. Many stores, detail camps, some Boer prisoners, and other military odds and ends here.

June 23.  
Sunday. Church Parade, at which there was a fair turn out. The young chaplain made a very good and short sermon.

Our final issue of new clothing was drawn from stores to-day and given out to us.

Orders were given us to be ready to entrain at 1.30 p.m. to-morrow.

June 24. Many bugles sounded reveille. We heard from the folds of our cosy blankets each different call, Infantry reveille, Mounted Infantry reveille, Cavalry and Artillery reveilles—we had almost forgotten them because they had been all but dispensed with at the front—but we hadn't to get up for all their clamour.

"For us no more shall brazen bugles blow,  
Or busy Provost ply his evening care."

With rather overdone complacency we criticised each trumpeter's performance and jeered rudely at false notes, yawned and turned over on the hard ground to give the other side a chance, but the parody begun insisted on its verse being dreamily completed to something about . . . and "our envied kits to share!"

During the afternoon we waited over three hours at the station, and in sight of so much to drink and so many privileged drinkers, our men got hot, thi

when we did start, sometime after four o'clock, came in for an unpleasant hooting. It was a regrettable incident.

We travelled all night in an open truck, which was the roomiest we had yet had, forty feet by seven. All the 34th and part of 35th travelled in it. The train was rather a long one. We went on all day, noting with some emotion the decreasing number of miles to Capetown as the white posts sped by. Dielfontein, Richmond Road, Victoria Road, and other stations were passed in turn. At Albert Road we learnt that we were but 266 miles from Table Bay! In the afternoon we stopped a short while at Matjesfontein, a clean, bright little "health resort," said to have been built by one Logan, a cricketer. Then Touw River was passed, and after that we came to the edge of the great African highlands. The mountains about us were snow-capped. We went down, for hours, in the moonlight, a terrific descent by almost impossible loops and turns. The scene was impressive and remarkable, and the men sat up and watched the wonderful changes that presented themselves as we turned and twisted from point to point. We arrived at Worcester at 1.30 a.m., and waited an hour. By daylight we were within fifty miles of Capetown.

As we got nearer and nearer to Capetown the excitement seemed to increase, or else it was that pent-up emotions had to escape. The men stood up in the trucks as we sped along, with missiles in both hands; tins of jam, bags of sugar, loaves of bread, tins of preserved meats, sardines, cooking-pots, billies—things that on the veldt had been beyond price—were used in a merry war against any man who happened to be walking by the right-of-way. It was a dangerous game, but the Kaffirs were only too eager to play it, and dodged our shells with wide and appreciative grins, counting themselves lucky as they made off, wonderingly, with the spoils. Then cheering began. Capetown had heard it before and knew what it all meant, and smiled. We were like a lot of school children coming home from a picnic—but such a picnic!

The train pulled up by the dock side at ten o'clock. We fell in with rifles, bandoliers and blankets, and Company by Company we deposited them in a vast store-room. Then we had our Maitland kits brought to us. How sad that was! There were so many sacks, names and numbers staring at us, that would never be claimed!

Our ship was waiting for us, and a good ship too—*Manchester Merchant*, of 3,000 tons registered, new and clean. Captain Crouch, master.

The roll call of the 34th who returned with the *Company* on board *Manchester Merchant* was as follows:—

Lieutenant Barrington, O.C.	Hayward	Richards
Campbell (Gun Section)	Jacoby	Weisberg
Corner	Kelsey	Wilshin, T. J.
Edmondston	Marriott	Wilshin, E. V.
Hunt		

We went aboard her and it was given out that we should sail at 4 p.m.; but we did but weigh anchor and then steam a little way into the Bay and anchor again. It was all very smartly done and a wise precaution, for the plague was about, and the authorities did not wish us to tarry anywhere in its haunts.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### HOMEWARD BOUND

WE sailed at 1.30 p.m., slipping away to the west and north-west, and soon we were out to sea. 1901.  
June 27.

There is little else to record; voyages are much alike. We had as fair a one as a homeward-bound heart could wish, which is saying much for it.

We travelled about 300 miles a day, sometimes a little more, sometimes less.

There were the usual games, concerts, sports, entertainments—and duties. The latter did not weigh very heavily upon our shoulders. The doctor inspected us every morning in line. The ocean had the same old, old stories to tell, by day and by night, to those who cared to listen, and those who did not, might listen to fairy tales, scarcely less wonderful, told by proprietors of “crown and anchor” sheets, such as “the more you puts down the more you picks up,” the tale of the “lucky ‘earts,” or the “poor little Kimberley.” There were sweepstakes on the runs.

Some men learnt to stoke, doing the work and “paying their footing” for doing it.

We met steamers and overtook steamers, and we saw that khaki was still the predominating freight.

The bugler’s lips became sore, and reveille was often delayed in consequence!

In the early morning, on July 6th, we crossed the equator; we were saying farewell to the Southern Cross and preparing to greet the North Star.

On July 9th we passed in sight of Cape  
midday on the 12th we were among the (



saw Teneriffe far to the east. At 6 p.m. we anchored off Las Palmas, almost alongside a French cruiser, and we were just in time to hear the band play the Marseillaise for the officers' mess. Our ship took aboard a lot of fresh vegetables and fruit, and again we weighed anchor and put to sea. By morning we were far on our way.

On July 17th we sighted many steamers from the time of reveille, on, and we knew there was not far to go. In the afternoon we sighted land, the twinkling cliffs of France. At 4 p.m. we were off Ushant.

July 18.

Sunrise of July 18th showed us England. By nine the pilot. How lovely the dear old coasts looked! Sky-lines, unfringed with spitting Mausers, were before us bathed in sunshine and calm. The very sea was still and peaceful as if to bid us welcome from the haunts of War.

We anchored for a while on the edge of Southampton Water for inspection. We shouldered kits for the last time, and brought all our belongings on deck. We landed about noon, and in the afternoon we were whisked off by train to Hounslow Barracks, and there, with as little delay as possible, we were dismissed for the night.

July 19.

On July 19th 34th and 35th, all that were left, were entertained at lunch by the Middlesex County Yeomanry. Colonel Mitford presided. There were speeches and toasts.

July 26.

On July 26th we assembled, with many old comrades who had come home before us, at Wellington Barracks. The weather was very wet and thundery, but cleared somewhat as the morning passed.

A collection was there made among the men for a brass to be erected in memory of Trooper Boughton, who so heroically gave up his life at Maperi Spruit on April 2nd.

We presently marched with many other Companies to the Horse Guards' Parade, where, during a function which lasted nearly three hours, three thousand returned Imperial Yeomen received their medals at the hands of His Majesty the King.

*God save the King!*

FINIS.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

### LIST OF CAMPS

LIST of Camps occupied by 84th Co. I. Y. during its campaign (1900-1901), from the date of disembarking at Cape Town, March 23, 1900, to the date of its return there on its homeward journey, June 26, 1901.

The particulars given indicate the place where the night of any particular day was spent. Wherever and whenever the Company was divided it is stated. The approximate number of miles which our brigade convoy or main body marched to reach the camps is stated. These distances do not include the extra miles an outer guard would travel in its indirect, sometimes almost zigzag courses, nor is any account taken of patrols, reconnaissances, special convoy guards, &c. It is difficult to compute the total distance *ridden on active service* by the firing-line, but it is almost certain that five thousand miles is well within the mark. Journeys on trains and standing camps are also indicated.

These notes and observations were taken in diary form from day to day, on trek and in camp, as opportunity allowed, and are subject to an inexactness of direction and distance of not great importance. As there is no accurate topographical authority or exact map with which to compare or check, the notes are given almost in uncorrected state. An itinerary map has been constructed from these notes.

No. of 1900. Camp.					
1.	Mar. 23 to April 18	}	Maitland Camp .. ..	..	.. Standing Camp.
"	19 to 20				
		}	On train, up-country, towards Norval's Pont .. ..	..	.. Train.
2.	" 21				
3.	" 22		Norval's Pont .. ..	..	Camp.
3.	" 23		Prior's .. ..	..	80 miles.
4.	" 23 and 24	}	Springfontein .. ..	..	.. 12 miles.
	" 24				
5.	" 25		Kopje Kraal Camp .. ..	..	7 miles.
6.	" 26		Jagersfontein Road .. ..	..	7 miles.
7.	" 27		Edenburg .. ..	..	23 miles.
8.	" 28 and 29	}	Bethanie .. ..	..	.. 12 to 15 miles.
	" 29				
9.	" 30		Kaffir's River .. ..	..	10 miles.

1900.		No. of Camp.		
10.	May	1	Ferreira's Siding (Paradise)..	15 to 20 miles.
11.	"	2	{ Passed through Bloemfontein to Bushman's Kop .. .. }	About 18 miles.
12.	"	3	Waterworks (Bloemfontein) ..	About 10 miles.
13.	"	4	Camp on road to Thaba N'chu..	About 10 miles.
14.	"	5	{ Thaba N'chu .. .. }	About 7 miles.
		and 6		
	"	6		
			Sect. III., 34 Co., under Lieut. Brune, was here separated from the rest of the Company to become General Rundle's Escort. The rest of the Com- pany joined General Boyes' Brigade, and made several reconnaissances in the direc- tions of Ladybrand, Abram's Kraal, Leeuwfontein, Par- devlei, &c., under Major Dalbiac, until we (Section III.) rejoined them on May 12	
	"	7 to 9	{ Thaba N'chu .. .. }	
15.	"	10 and 11	{ Eden .. .. }	8 to 10 miles.
16.	"	12	{ General Boyes' Camp, North of Egypt .. .. }	4 miles.
17.	"	13	General Boyes' Main Camp ..	5 miles.
18.	"	14	Camp near Brand's Drift ..	6 miles.
19.	"	15	Camp .. ..	5 miles.
20.	"	16	Camp .. ..	{ About 8 or 10 miles.
21.	"	17 to 21	{ Bester's Flat .. .. }	About 12 miles.
22.	"	22 and 23	{ Night march from Bester's Flat through Gibson's Farm to .. Mexico .. .. }	12 miles.
23.	"	24	{ Beldban, near Zuiferquil. (I took despatches to Ferreira Farm. See Map) .. .. }	15 miles.
24.	"	25 to 30	{ Senekal .. .. }	18 miles.
25.	"	31	Camp south of Senekal ..	8 miles.
26.	June	1	Near Hibernia .. ..	6 miles.
27.	"	2 to 12	{ Klip Nek .. .. }	4 miles.
28.	"	13 to 15	{ Middlesex Kopje .. .. }	3½ miles.

1900.	No. of Camp.				
	29.	June 16	Hammonia .. .. .	6 or 7 miles.	
	30.	" 17 to 23	Ficksburg .. .. .	10 to 12 miles.	
	31.	" 24 " 25 to July 12	Night March through Hammonia to Klip Nek .. .. . Klip Nek Camp .. .. .	18 miles.	
	32.	" 13	Klip Nek to Boer Laager E. ..	9 miles.	
	33.	" 14	Boer Laager to fresh site ..	$\frac{1}{2}$ mile.	
	34.	" 15	Boer Laager to fresh site ..	$\frac{1}{2}$ mile.	
	35.	" 16 to 18	Camp E. .. .. .	4 miles.	
			(On 18th July, Roller took 18 men to Senekal, and returned on July 24)		
		" 19	Same camp as 18th, for our section .. .. .		
	36.	" 20 and 21	Hammonia .. .. .	? 12 or 14 miles.	
	37.	" 22	Willow Grange .. .. .	5 miles.	
	38.	" 23	East of Willow Grange 3 miles	3 miles.	
	39.	" 24	Change of site .. .. .	$\frac{1}{2}$ mile.	
	40.	" 25	Night March through Ficksburg Plain (to within 3 miles of Ficksburg), through Commando Nek, to Gordon Farm.. ..	About 15 miles.	
	41.	" 26	Fouriesburg .. .. .	15 miles.	
	42.	" 27	3 miles east .. .. .	3 miles.	
	43.	" 28	Schoenseg Kopje .. .. .	7 miles.	
	44.	" 29 and 30	Surrender Hill Slaap Krans ..	3 miles.	
			(I was at Fouriesburg with Lieut. Newnham's Prisoners' Guard on July 30.)		
	45.	" 31	Surrender Hill, new site east, near Boer late laagers.. ..	2 miles.	
	Aug. 1.		The following camps (Aug. 1 to 6) are those of Sergt. Green's Prisoners' Guard, of which I was a member, from Surrender Hill to Slabbert's Nek and back, on to Harrismith. The main body of the 34th Company marched about 24 hours in advance of us, from Surrender Hill to Harrismith, which place they reached on Aug. 6, and we on Aug. 7.		

1900.		No. of Camp.		
46.	Aug.	1	Schoenseg Kopje .. ..	5 miles.
47.	"	2	Through Fouriesburg to near Slabbert's Nek .. ..	15 miles.
48.	"	3	Back through Fouriesburg to Blackwoods—De la Harpe's Farm .. ..	10 to 12 miles.
49.	"	4	Naauwpoort Nek Camp, past Surrender Hill .. ..	About 20 miles.
50.	"	5	Groendraai Farm .. ..	12 to 15 miles.
51.	"	6	Klerkspruit .. ..	About 12 miles.
52.	"	7 and 8	Camp 3 miles north-west of Harrismith .. ..	About 25 miles.
53.	"	9 and 10	Mill River Camp.. ..	12 to 15 miles.
54.	"	12	Georgina (Lieut. Newnham's Long Ride, a Reconnaissance)	70 or 80 miles.
		13	Through Vinknest and back south-east, and again back near Vinknest to Brigade Camp, we had met the Brigade on the march. Lieut. Newnham's Reconnaissance, total .. ..	
55.	"	14 to 16	South-eastern precincts of Reits	27 miles.
56.	"	17 and 18	Town of Reits (west) .. ..	3 miles.
57.	"	19	Leave Reits towards Vrede ..	9 miles.
58.	"	20	Encircling March to Wilge River	About 15 miles.
59.	"	21 and 22	Camp eastward near Wilge River	About 6 miles.
60.	"	23	Ride towards Vrede under Wyndham Quin. Twenty of us, under Newnham, rode into Vrede Town, and afterwards the whole of Wyndham Quin's party camped 6 miles south-west of Vrede .. ..	About 35 to 40 miles to camp.
61.	"	24	Returned to Wilge River, where the Brigade Camp had remained .. ..	About 20 miles.
62.	"	25	North-east (a march) .. ..	8 miles.
63.	"	26	Woodside Store by Leeuw Kop..	About 7 miles
64.	"	27 to 29	Vrede .. ..	1 mile.
65.	"	30 to Sept. 2	Vrede. Change site of Camp .. (There were several important reconnaissances during this stay at Vrede.)	



1900.		No. of Camp.		
66.	Sept.	3	{ Under Roller I was one of 30 men who took cattle to the Transvaal over de Lange's Drift, Klip River. We camped 7 miles north of Vrede .. }	7 miles.
67.	"	4	Trans-Klip Camp (de Lange's Drift)	10 miles.
68.	"	5	Vrede .. .. .	17 miles.
69.	"	6	Newmarket .. .. .	25 or 28 miles.
70.	"	7	{ Mill River (rejoining Boyes' Brigade and rest of Company) }	About 18 miles.
71.	"	8	{ Langridge's Farm (about 20 miles west of Harrismith) .. .. }	? 15 to 18 miles.
72.	"	9	South-west on Bethlehem road	13 miles.
73.	"	10	South-west on Bethlehem road	12 miles.
74.	"	11 and 12	{ Bethlehem .. .. . }	12 miles.
75.	"	13	From Bethlehem on Senekal road	12 miles.
76.	"	14	Near Biddulphsberg .. ..	18 miles.
77.	"	15 and 16	{ Senekal .. .. . }	8 or 9 miles.
78.	"	17	Bronkhorstfontein West.. ..	15 miles.
79.	"	18	{ From Bronkhorstfontein south- west .. .. . }	5 miles.
80.	"	19	{ From camp back towards Senekal and camp 5 miles from Senekal }	About 15 miles.
81.	"	20	{ Still back and through Senekal to the north-west corner of Biddulphsberg .. .. }	15 miles.
82.	"	21	{ On Bethlehem road to about 8 miles from Bethlehem .. }	About 25 miles.
83.	"	22 to 24	{ Bethlehem .. .. . }	8 miles.
84.	"	25	Blaauwkop.. .. .	15 miles.
85.	"	26	Between Lindley and Reitz ..	10 or 12 miles.
86.	"	27 and 28	{ About north to Elandskop near Trommel Farm, Bethlehem Dist. .. .. . }	10 to 12 miles.
87.	"	29	South-east towards Reitz ..	9 miles.
88.	"	30 to 11	{ Reitz .. .. . }	12 miles.
89.	Oct.	12	{ From Reitz to south-east on Harrismith road .. .. }	18 miles.
90.	"	13	Langridge's Farm .. ..	15 miles.
91.	"	14 to 3	{ Harrismith, west of Platberg. Many patrols while in Harri- smith .. .. . }	About 20 miles.
92.	"	4	North of Harrismith .. ..	7 miles.
93.	"	5	Mill River Bridge Camp ..	About 12 miles.

1900.	No. of Camp.		
	94. Nov. 6	Cornelis River .. .. .	{ About 10 or 11 miles.
	95. " 7	{ Pass Newmarket Store north to } about 4 miles beyond.. .. }	10 miles.
	96. " 8	On towards Vrede .. .. .	8 miles.
	97. " 9	Vrede .. .. .	12 miles.
	98. " 10	{ North of Vrede towards Stan- } derton .. .. . }	7 miles.
	99. " 11	{ Klip River, de Lange's Drift } (Transvaal) .. .. . }	About 9 miles.
	100. " 12 to 14	Standerton .. .. .	About 15 miles
	101. " 15	{ From Standerton to Klip River } Drift .. .. . }	About 15 miles
	102. " 16 and 17	Vrede .. .. .	16 to 18 miles
	103. " 18	From Vrede about south-west ..	About 14 miles
	104. " 19	{ Camp 8. (Newmarket store is 8 } miles south) .. .. . }	10 miles.
	105. " 20	Cornelis River .. .. .	About 10 miles
	106. " 21	Mill River.. .. .	About 12 miles
	107. " 22	{ Camp at kopje or berg, 7 miles } north of Harrismith .. .. }	About 12 miles
	108. " 23 to 26	Harrismith .. .. .	7 miles.
	109. " 27	{ Night March, out on Bethlehem } Road .. .. . }	18 miles.
	" 28	{ Returned towards Harrismith } from Elands River, and camped } 14 miles from Harrismith .. }	4 miles.
	110. " 29 to 2	Harrismith .. .. .	12 miles.
	Dec. 3	{ Bridge near Harrismith on Beth- } lehem road .. .. . }	About 4 miles.
	112. " 4	{ Elands River Bridge, Bethlehem } road .. .. . }	About 12 miles
	113. " 5	Camp north-west.. .. .	10 miles.
	114. " 6	Camp about north-west.. ..	15 miles.
	115. " 7	Reitz .. .. .	8 miles.
	116. " 8	{ Camp by River south-west by } west (?) .. .. . }	12 miles.
	117. " 9 and 10	West and south-west (Rietpan)	8 miles.
	118. " 11	{ J. C. De Villier's Farm, ? Sterk- } fontein .. .. . }	6 miles.
		{ A telegraph line crosses south } (Lindley-Bethlehem line) .. }	

No. of 1900. Camp.			
119.	Dec. 12	{ From last camp 12 miles south-west to in sight of Senekal Berge, and Wonderkop in far distance, south-west .. .. }	12 miles.
120.	" 13	{ Zand River 7 or 8 miles north-west of Biddulphsberg .. }	About 10 miles.
121.	" 14	{ Senekal .. .. . }	About 15 miles.
122.	" 16	{ Reconnaissances towards Doorn- to kop direction. (Camp was about 6 miles out on Winburg Road.) }	6 miles.
123.	" 19	{ Camp at Wildebeestelaagte, on Senekal-Winburg road .. }	18 miles.
124.	" 20	{ Piet Maré's Farm, 3 or 4 miles from Winburg .. .. }	About 12 miles.
125.	" 21	{ Winburg .. .. . }	4 miles.
126.	" 22	{ Left Winburg, on Senekal road }	16 miles.
127.	" 23	{ About east about 8 miles, passing Bester's Flats to right rear—to Spykop and Leenuwkoop, towards Doornkop .. .. }	8 miles.
128.	" 24	{ Camp eastward .. .. . }	About 5 miles.
129.	" 25	{ To Senekal .. .. . }	20 miles.
1901.	Jan. 1		
130.	" 2	{ Zand Spruit beyond Biddulphs- berg .. .. . }	12 miles.
131.	" 3	{ On one of the Senekal-Lindley roads north-east, which is only 7 miles south of Lindley .. }	15 miles.
132.	" 4	{ South-east 5 miles, and east about 10, when we reach de Villiers' Farm, ? Sterkfontein, camp of Dec. 11 .. .. . }	About 15 miles.
133.	" 5	{ North-east on a Reitz road, and camped on the ground of camp of Dec. 10 (Rietpan) .. }	About 6 miles.
134.	" 6	{ Blaauwkoop, Jan Prinsloo's Farm (Bethlehem Dist.) south-east.. }	About 8 miles.
135.	" 7	{ Travelled generally in a south- westerly direction, and came in sight of Witkop, Biddulphs- berg, and Tafelsberg .. .. }	12 or 15 miles.
136.	" 8	{ North-east end of Biddulphsberg, after trekking almost due west for— .. .. . }	About 10 miles.
137.	" 9	{ Senekal .. .. . }	9 miles.
138.	" 10	{ On road north-east .. .. . }	5 or 6 miles.
139.	" 11	{ Passed through camp of Jan 9, on to a point about east of Biddulphsberg 7 miles .. }	About 10 miles.

1901. Camp.		No. of			
140.	Jan.	13	Necramo Nek, east .. ..	About 5 miles	
141.	"	14 and 15	Bethlehem .. ..	About 20 miles	
142.	"	16	Trekking north-east .. ..	About 10 or miles.	
143.	"	17 to 20	Reitz, trekked along by Bethlehem Reitz Telegraph Line..	About 18 miles	
144.	"	21	Trekking south-east towards Platberg, on "a right-hand road towards Harrismith .. ..	15 miles.	
145.	"	22	Georgina Store, trekking south-east .. ..	7 or 8 miles.	
146.	"	23 to 25	Elands River Bridge .. ..	About 8 miles	
147.	"	26	Trek back 3 miles beyond Georgina	10 miles.	
148.	"	27	Trek west towards Bethlehem ..	About 10 miles	
149.	"	28 to 30	Bethlehem .. ..	About 12 miles	
150.	"	31	Trek on Senekal Road to camp, in sight of Slabbert's Nek ..	12 miles.	
151.	Feb.	1	Trek past Necramo Nek to 5 miles the other side towards the Senekal bergs, not far from Witkop .. ..	12 miles.	
152.	"	2	Passed under west side of Witkop in a south-west direction ..	10 miles.	
153.	"	3	Hammonia, via Middlesex Kopje	About 15 miles	
154.	"	4 to 10	Ficksburg .. ..	About 12 miles	
155.	"	11	After going to Hammonia and resting from afternoon till midnight, we made a Night March through Klip Nek to Hibernia, destroyed the mill in early morning (12th), returned to Klip Nek for rest; then	About 45 miles	
156.	"	12 to 16	Returned from Klip Nek to Ficksburg, remaining at Ficksburg .. ..		
A. N. M.	"	17	All Night March, past Zout Kop, through Commando Nek ..		
157.	"	18	Camp some 5 or 6 miles south-west of Fouriesburg .. ..		
158.	"	19	We passed to the left (west) of Fouriesburg towards the north to Steyn's Mill, and destroyed it, and returned to camp in Fouriesburg .. ..	Total, over : miles.	

No. of 1901. Camp.			
159.	Feb. 20 and 21	{ After destroying Mills near Four- lesburg we trekked through Bester's Vlei to Brindisi Cross- ing of Caledon—Middleton's Mill—Camp at Brindisi Cross- ing .. .. . }	About 8 miles.
160.	" 22	{ Cross into Basutoland, and camp at Thlotse .. .. . }	About 18 miles.
161.	" 23 to Mar. 6	{ Ficksburg .. .. . }	About 15 miles.
162.	" 7	{ Crossed into Basutoland, and march about south-west on Maseru road .. .. . }	12 to 14 miles.
163.	" 8	{ Trekged in rain about 6 or 7 miles to the bank of a river, a tribu- tary of the Caledon .. .. . }	7 miles.
164.	" 9	{ Marched through Teyatenening to a kraal 6 miles beyond .. }	About 9 miles.
165.	" 10	{ Camp near Maseru (about 2 miles north-east) .. .. . }	About 8 miles.
166.	" 11	{ Recross Caledon River through Maseru into O.R.C. .. .. . }	About 3 miles.
167.	" 12	Commissie Poort .. .. .	About 12 miles.
168.	" 13 to 26	{ Warringham's Store or Thaba Patschoa, Leeuw River .. }	About 8 miles.
169.	" 27	Cross Leeuw River to Camp ..	1 mile.
170.	" 28	Commissie Poort Store .. ..	7 or 8 miles.
171.	" 29 and 30	{ Trekged 10 or 12 miles towards Ladybrand, and camp about 4 miles from Ladybrand .. }	10 or 12 miles.
172.	" 31	{ Through Modderpoort to 2 miles beyond .. .. . }	About 10 miles.
173.	April 1 to 8	{ Clooclan Stores .. .. . }	About 15 miles.
174.	" 4 to 21	{ Ficksburg .. .. . }	18 to 20 miles.
175.	" 22	Willow Grange .. .. .	6 miles.
176.	" 24 to May 6	{ Back to Ficksburg .. .. . }	6 miles.
177.	" 7	Commando Nek (west) .. ..	About 8 miles.
178.	" 8	Commando Nek (east) .. ..	About 2 miles.
179.	" 9	Commando Nek (west) .. ..	About 2 miles.
180.	" 10 and 11	{ Ficksburg .. .. . }	About 8 miles.



No. of 1901. Camp.					
181.	May 12	{	Brigade moved out of Ficksburg ; 84 Co. went with it, but I re- mained with three others at Ficksburg Remount Kraal (which, although not a Com- pany Camp, I have named 181) as guard until May 22, and rejoined Company at Brindisi Crossing on May 26. Ralli gave me list of Company Camps as follows:—		
182.	" 12		Commando Nek .. .. .	8 miles.	
183.	" 13 and 14		Brindisi .. .. .	4 miles.	
184.	" 15		Fouriesburg .. .. .	About 8 miles.	
185.	" 16		Mill in Brandwater Basin ..	4 to 5 miles.	
186.	" 17 to 19	{	Inhoek Camp near Schoonsag Kopje .. .. .	4 miles.	
187.	" 20		Rauterback Camp .. .. .	About 5 miles.	
188.	" 21 and 22	{	Fouriesburg .. .. .	About 8 miles.	
189.	" 23 to 25		Brindisi Crossing.. .. .	About 8 miles.	
190.	" 26 to 30	{	Fouriesburg .. .. .	About 8 miles.	
191.	" 31 to June 2		Past Surrender Hill to Walker's Farm, 17 hours' work ..	About 17 miles	
192.	" 3	{	Van Lyl's Farm, Camp near Golden Gate .. .. .	About 6 miles.	
193.	" 4		Golden Gate .. .. .	4 miles.	
194.	" 5		Golden Gate (near) .. .. .	1 mile.	
195.	" 6		2 miles further on, Golden Gate	About 2 miles.	
196.	" 7	{	2 miles further east of last camp. Ross' Ostrich Farm .. .. .	About 2 miles.	
197.	" 8		Elands River Drift .. .. .	About 12 miles	
198.	" 9 to 12	{	Harrismith .. .. .	About 19 miles	
"	13		Left Harrismith by train to Ladysmith .. .. .		
"	14		Volksrust .. .. .		
"	15		On train Volksrust to Standerton		
"	16	{	On train Elandsfontein to Kroon- stad .. .. .		
"	17		Kroonstad to Bloemfontein on train .. .. .		
"	18	{	Bloemfontein to Norval's Pont on train.. .. .		
"	19		Nauwpoort to De Aar on train		

No. of			
1901. Camp.			
199.	June	20	{ De Aar Camp .. .. .
		to 23	
	"	24	{ On train from De Aar towards Cape Town .. .. .
	"	25	
	"	25	{ On train past Worcester ..
	"	26	
	"	26	{ Arrived at Cape Town at 10 a.m. and went on board <i>Manchester</i> <i>Merchant</i> .. .. .
	"	27	
	"	27	{ Sailed from Table Bay at midday. Voyage .. .. .
	to		
July	18		{ Landed at Southampton, July 18, 1901.

## APPENDIX II

### ROSTER AND RECORD OF THE 34TH COMPANY I.Y.

Very few of the particulars here given are from official sources or records; they are for the most part from personal memoranda and observations of the author. Much care has been taken to arrive at accuracy, and it is hoped that errors are neither of importance nor many.

*Abbreviations.*—Some abbreviations have been used which are mostly self-explanatory. "F. Sect. III/II." means that the man first belonged to Section III., but that at the rearrangement of the Company at Senekal he became a member of Section II., and so on. "Co." sometimes stands for "County." The rank after each name is that given at Knightsbridge after enlistment.

6345 **Agnew, Herman M.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., son of T. F. A. Agnew, Esq., Bank of England, Liverpool.

Lance-Corpl., April, 1900. † *Wounded* at Senekal, May 25, 1900. Took enteric, June, 1900. Rejoined Company at Harrismith, Oct. 21, 1900. Lance-Sergt. and Acting-Sergt. from November, 1900, to Feb. 13, 1901. Sergeant of Attached Regulars, Feb., 1901. Commission at Ficksburg, March 5, 1901. Dysentery at Maseru, March 10 to April 15. Returned to Ficksburg. Lord Roberts's List of Recommendations for Meritorious Services dated Sept. 4, 1901. Distinguished Conduct Medal, Gazette, Sept. 27, 1901. † *Killed in action* at Tweefontein, Dec. 25, 1901.

6264 **Anderson, W. M.**, Tpr., F. Sect. II/I., Charing Cross Hospital, London.

Attached to Military Police with 17th Brigade. Australian experience. Left Company for home at Harrismith, Nov., 1900.

6411 **Anthony, W. G.**, Tpr., 139, Stanhope Street, Hampstead Road, N.W.

Officers' Servant, not in Firing Line. Finally Barrington's servant, and came home with him and remnant of Company on *es. Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901. Old Regular.

6265 **Baker, C. H.**, Tpr., 31, Manor Park, Lee, Kent.

Left ill at Klip Drift, June, 1900. Rejoined at Harrismith, Nov. 29, 1900. Left Company at Fouriesburg, May 27, 1901.

6267 **Banks, J.**, Tpr., Belmont, Kendal.

† *Severely Wounded* at Middlesex Kopje, Klip Nek, June 13, 1900. Lung wound. Invalided home.

**4268 Barrington, Hon. Rupert E. S., Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., 40, Harrington Gardens, London, S.W.**

Obtained Commission, Dec. 1, 1900. Came home in command of Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901. Relinquished Commission, Aug. 23 (Gazette), 1901. Returned to South Africa with Commission in South African Constabulary, Jan. 16, 1902.

**6253 Barton, F. W., Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., Lyncroft, Wallington.**

Corpl. Knightsbridge Barracks, Feb., 1900. Ill April, 1900. Rejoined June, 1900. † *Wounded*, shoulder and leg, Bethlehem, Sept. 22, 1900. Invalided home. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

**4235 Bell, G., Tpr., F. Sect. II/I., 124, Holland Street, Glasgow.**

Left Company ill near Willow Grange, July 23, 1900.

**6308 Blount, G. W., Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., son of Mrs. Blount and the late Capt. Blount, R.N., Melrose, Fontenoy Road, Balham, S.W.**

Left ill at Reitz, Dec. 7, 1900. Rejoined at Reitz, Jan. 17, 1901. Left ill at Elands River Bridge, Jan. 24, 1901. ✕ *Died* at Mooi River of enteric, Feb. 16, 1901.

**6359 Blyth, W. E., Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., son of E. K. Blyth, Esq., 6, Roslyn Hill, Hampstead.**

Captured at Senekal, May 25, 1900. Released Aug. 28, 1900. Rejoined Company at Bethlehem, Sept. 25, 1900. Left ill at Winburg, Dec. 24, 1900. ✕ *Died* of enteric at Winburg, Jan. 12, 1901. Experience in United States 5 years, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Had been a Sergeant in a Volunteer Corps.

**6364 Boughton, J. C., Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., son of Charles Boughton, Esq., Netherlands, Tillington, Petworth, Sussex.**

Col. Mitford's orderly at Gen. Rundle's headquarters. Afterwards at I. Y. Stores at Harri Smith. Rejoined Company at Harri Smith, Dec. 2, 1900. ✕ *Drowned* at Clocolan in Maperi River, April 2, 1901, trying to save the life of Kennard, of 36th Company, who was also drowned. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

**6269 Bower, B., Shoosing Smith, F. Sect. IV/I., The Firs, Farleigh Road, Stoke Newington.**

Rode in Firing Line intermittently. Left Company with Capt. Brune as his servant at Elands River Bridge, Jan. 25, 1901.

**6266 Bradley, E. A., Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., brother of Messrs. Bradley, 81, Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, London, W.**

Went through the whole campaign in Firing Line. ✕ *Died* of enteric at Ficksburg, May 31, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

**Brooks, Qr.-Mstr. and Hon. Lieut. (Battalion Staff).**

Left the battalion early. Formerly in 1st Life Guards.

**Brune, G. E. Prideaux, Glentorr, Bideford, N. Devon.**

Lieut. of Section III., 34th Company, Jan. 26, 1900. Army List date, Feb. 3, 1900. On General Boyes' Staff from May 13 to May 26, 1900. Promoted Captain. Sick leave from August 11 to Sept. 25, 1900. Aide to General Boyes, Dec. 23, 1900. Went home Jan. 24, 1901, from Elands River Bridge. Formerly Lieut. 6th Dragoons (Inniskilling).

- 6266 **Bunbury, C.**, Tpr., 88, Netherwood Road, Kensington, W.  
Left Company at beginning of the campaign at Bloemfontein, May, 1900. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- 6301 **Burrows, A. E.**, Corpl. F. Sect. II/I., 40, Strutton Ground, Westminster.  
Sergt. *vice* Shells, May 25, 1900. Left Company at end of campaign, near Ladybrand (8 miles), March 30, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- 6344 **Caldwell, J. B.**, Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., 60, Fairholm Road, W. Kensington.  
Invalided at Harrismith for home, Dec., 1900. Commission in New I. Y. Remount Dept.
- 4255 **Campbell, N. J.**, Tpr., Gun Section, "Forester's Arms," Holyhead, N. Wales.  
Promoted Corpl., April, 1901. Returned with Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901.
- 4241 **Canny, H.**, Tpr., Gun Section, 29, Crescent Road, Woolwich.  
Corpl. Gun Section *vice* Hall. Sergt. Gun Section *vice* Hall. Left ill at Warringham Store. Experience as Signaller and Sergt. in 3rd Rifles. In Woolwich Arsenal.
- 6349 **Chelmeley, Hugh**, Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., 15, Stanhope Gardens, London, S.W.  
Invalided at Harrismith for home, Dec., 1900. Experience in Ceylon, Assam, &c.
- 6273 **Christy, Duncan F.**, Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., 1, Dennington Park Mansions, W. Hampstead.  
Left ill at Harrismith, Dec., 1900. Rejoined Company, Jan. 23, 1901. Detached to Willow Grange Farm Camp. Left ill and in charge of kits at Fouriesburg, May 27, 1901. Came home with details *via* Bethlehem, July, 1901. Experience in Australia, one year. Re-enlisted in Veteran Corps. Commission in South Africa.
- 6342 **Clifford, H. E.**, Tpr., Rectory Farm, Bourton-on-Hill, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire.  
Orderly to General Boyes. Staff. Rejoined ranks of Company, Nov. 29, 1900. Left ill at Ficksburg, March, 1901. Rejoined Company at Ficksburg, May, 1901. Remained at Harrismith, June, 1901 to join New I. Y. as Qr.-Mstr.-Sergt. Survived Tweefontein. Commended in Lord Kitchener's despatch, June 23, 1902.
- 6243 **Corner, William**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., Wellington, Somerset.  
Remained with Company and returned with Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901. Experience over 15 years in United States and Mexico.
- 244 **Cowan, C. J.**, Qr.-Mstr.-Sergt.-Major, 10, Wickham Road, Brockley.  
Compy.-Sergt.-Major *vice* Roller, May 25, 1900. Left Company at Vrede for Standerton, Aug., 1900. Returned to Company at Bethlehem, Sept. 25, 1900. Remained at Harrismith to join New I. Y. as Regt.-Sergt.-Major, June, 1901. Returned to England Aug., 1901. Gasetted Tempory.-Lieut., Jan. 21, 1902. Old Regular Dragon.



**6272 Craig, Tpr., A.**, 17, Grand Parade, Putney, S.W.

No information. Not in Firing Line of Company 34. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

**Dalbiac, Henry Skelley**, Old Family Seat at Durrington, near Worthing.

Capt. 34th Company from Jan. 26, 1900 (*Gazette*). ✕ *Killed in action* at Senekal, May 25, 1900. Late Major Royal Artillery, 1871 to 1888. Egyptian Campaign, 1882. Distinguished himself and was wounded at Battle of Tel-el-Kebir. Medals and Orders: Medjidie 4th Class, Egyptian with Clasp (Tel-el-Kebir) and Star.

**Dalgetty, F. J.**, Adjutant at Maitland Camp. Lockerley Hall, near Romsey, Hants.

Adjutant 11th Battalion I. Y., Feb. 10, 1900. Invalided home suffering from blood-poisoning at Winburg, May 16, 1900. Late Capt. 15th Hussars, March 25, 1894.

**6274 Davern, A. H.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., 43, Warwick Road, Ealing.

Left Company at Harrismith, Nov., 1900. Became detail at Bethlehem till June, 1901. Experience in South African Constabulary, Australia, Canada, and other parts of the world.

**6275 Davies, H. Price**, Tpr., F. Sect. IV/II., 7, Leinster Mansions, Fognal, Finchley Road, N.

Left Company ill at Fouriesburg, Aug. 2, 1900. Rejoined in South African Police. Experience in Canadian Police.

**4248 Day, H. H.**, Tpr., Gun Section, 11, Vere Street, London, W.

Enrolled in Gun Section. Transferred to Company 34th at Klip Drift. Left Company ill December, 1900. Became detail at Bethlehem until June, 1901.

**6254 Deane, H. S.**, Tpr., son of Col. Geo. Deane, 18th Bengal Cavalry.

✕ *Killed in action* at Senekal, May 25, 1900.

**Denman**, Lieut. Lord, Stony Middleton, Sheffield.

Lieut. Sect. IV., 34th Company, at Knightsbridge (Army List, Feb. 3, 1900). Left 34th Company ill at Bloemfontein, May, 1900. Rejoined Battalion as Capt. of 35th Company at Harrismith, Aug. 1900. † *Wounded* in leg at Cornelis River, Nov. 20, 1900, and invalided home. Late Lieut. Royal Scots, March 7, 1894.

**4240 Dixon, W. G.**, Sergt. Gun Section, 34, Victoria Road, Kensington, W.

Commission Lieut. *vice* Guthrie, May 16, 1900. Attached to 35th Company until June 18, 1900. Adjutant of Battalion, *vice* Dalgetty, June 18, 1900. Capt., June 18, 1900. Returned in command, as Senior Officer, of Battalion on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, *vice* Lieut.-Col. Firman remaining in South Africa, July 18, 1901. Experience in Ceylon and South America. Continued service on Transport Duty.

**6246 Edmondston, C. Blet**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., The Manse, Blair Drummond, Stirling.

Corporal. Lance-Sergt. *vice* Agnew. Sergt. April 14, 1901. In Lord Roberts's List Recommendations Meritorious Service, Sept. 4, 1901. Came home in *Manchester Merchant* with Company, July 18, 1901.

- 6370 **Edwards, John**, Tpr., F. Sect. IV/II., 2, Gunpowder Alley, Shoe Lane, E.C.  
Cook to Company until Nov. 8, 1900. Joined ranks Nov. 8, 1900.  
† Wounded in head near Vrede, Nov. 9, 1900. Cook again until April 7, 1901. Rejoined Firing Line April 7, 1901. Became saddler and remained at Harrismith to join the New Yeomanry. Old Regular 37th Hampshire Regiment. Burmah medal and two clasps, 1888-7, 1887-90.
- 6372 **Eustace, G. W.**, Tpr., Arundel, Sussex.  
Employed on Headquarters' Staff. Not in Firing Line. M.D. and M.A. Dublin. Left for home Nov., 1900.
- 4234 **Evans, J. B.**, Lance-Corpl. Gun Section, 15, Down Place, Victoria Road, Kensington, W.  
Sergt. vice Dixon promoted. Lieut. commission vice Peacocks, May 11, 1900. Rode with Company for a short period. Subsequently Lieut. of Gun Section until June, 1901.
- 6305 **Exshaw, A.**, Tpr., New Club, 4, Grafton Street, London, W.  
Experience in United States. Etonian. Went home, bad eyes. Klip Nek, July, 1900.
- 6360 **Faber, W. L.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., Chartered Bank of India and China, London.  
Left Senekal ill for Winburg, and invalided home, Jan. 11, 1901.
- 6255 **Farrell, M.**, Tpr., 34, Colville Square Mansions, Paddington, W.  
No information. Not in Firing Line.
- 6306 **Fearnley, G.**, Tpr., F. Sect. II/I., 27, Huntsworth Terrace, Marylebone.  
Officer's Servant. Not in Firing Line. Left ill at Winburg, Dec. 24, 1900. Experience in Greece in Turko-Grecian Campaign.
- Firman, R. B.**, 94, Piccadilly, London.  
Capt. 35th Company, Feb. 7, 1900. Promoted Major vice Dalhousie, Capt., May 25, 1900. Promoted Lt.-Col. commanding 11th Battalion, August 22, 1900. Lord Roberts's List Recommendations Meritorious Service, Sept. 4 and 10, 1901. Companion of the Distinguished Service Order (Gazette) Sept. 27, 1901. Late Capt. 23rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Medals: Egyptian Medal and Star, Burmah Medal. D.S.O.
- 6242 **Fortescue, C. E.**, Tpr., F. Sect. II/I., son of Mrs. Fortescue, Ocm. Torquay, South Devon.  
Left ill of enteric at Winburg and ✠ Died there, Jan. 2, 1901. Experience in West Indies, 2 years; India, 8 years.
- 6358 **Fowler, H.**, Tpr., F. Sect. IV/II., St. Albans.  
Left Company with Lieut. Gray, who was wounded at Harrismith on Nov. 30, 1900. Returned to Company from Cape Town, Jan. 23, 1901. Left ill at Maseru, Basutoland, March 10, 1901. Returned to Company at Modderpoort, March 31, 1901. Remained at Harrismith to join New Yeomanry as Qr.-Mstr.-Sergt., June, 1901. Survived Tweefontein. Obtained a Commission in N. I. Y., 1902, and Commanded Gun Section vice Lieut. Watney, killed in action.

6418 **Frodsham, L. D. M.**, Tpr., F. Sect. II/I., Denham House, Streatham, London, S.W.

Invalided home from Senekal *via* Winburg on Jan. 11, 1901.

6276 **Gibb, J. Onslow**, Tpr., 26, Half Moon Street, W.

Left ill at Klip Drift, July 12, 1900. Subsequently obtained a Commission in 5th Company, Warwickshires. Transferred to S.A.C.

6307 **Gibbons, H.**, Tpr., F. Sect. IV., 73, Inderwick Road, Hornsey, N.

Left early, 1900.

6256 **Godwin, A.**, Tpr., Stokes Gifford, near Bristol, Gloucester.

Officer's Servant. Staff Servant. Not in Firing Line. Old Regular. Tirah Campaign, 1897-98. Remained as Orderly Room Sergt. *vice* Hides, N. Y. Squadron. Sergt.-Major 36th Company in New Yeomanry.

6245 **Gray, F. Cecil**, Corpl., F. Sect. IV/II., Thursley, Godalming, Surrey.

Commission as Lieut., Harrismith, Nov. 1, 1900. † *Wounded* in arm near Newmarket, Nov. 19, 1900. Invalided home from Harrismith, Nov. 30, 1900. Experience in Australia for years. Continued service in Remount Department, and promoted Captain.

6277 **Green, A. A.**, Corpl., F. Sect. III/II., Grosvenor Club, Bond Street, W.

Sergt. *vice* Cowan, May 25, 1900. Confirmed July 21, 1900. Left Company to give evidence at Maitland *re* kit robbery. Returned to Company end of May, 1900. Left ill at Winburg Hospital, Dec. 24, 1900. Detail at Bethlehem until June, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

4233 **Groome, Robert**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., 6, Park Crescent, Worthing.

† *Wounded* in groin at Elands Kop, Sept. 28, 1900. Invalided from Harrismith to Mooi River, Oct. 22, 1900. Experience in Texas, U.S.A., &c. Commission in New Yeomanry and returned to South Africa as Lieut., 1902.

6335 **Grout, G. G.**, Tpr., F. Sect. II/II. (brother of O. A. Grout).

✱ *Killed in action* near Middlesex Kopje, Klip Nek, June 13, 1900. Shot through femoral artery. Buried at Klip Nek. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

6353 **Grout, C. A.**, Tpr., F. Sect. II/I., Marlborough Park Cottage, Isleworth, Middlesex.

Ammunition Guard. Left Co. ill Jan., 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman. Brother of above G. G. Grout.

6278 **Grumley, J.**, Corpl., "Seven Stars," Goldhawk Road, Shepherd's Bush.

Made Qr.-Mstr.-Sergt. May 25, 1900, *vice* Nicoll, Sergt. Left ill at Vrede, Nov., 1900. Invalided home. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

6246 **Hagger, A. E.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., c/o Mrs. Smith, 95, Melody Road, Wandsworth Common.

Officer's Servant from beginning of our campaign. Old Regular, 18th Hussars. Went home Jan., 1901.

4232 **Hall, S. E.**, Tpr., Gun Section, son of Mrs. Hall, 110, Palmers Road, New Southgate, London, N.

Corpl. Gun Section *vice* Evans. Sergt. Gun Section, May 11, 1901, *vice* Evans. Commission Lieut., Ficksburg, March 5, 1901. Rode with a Section of 34th Company. Remained to join the New Yeomanry. Promoted Captain, July, 1901. Experience in Bechuanaland Border Police. ✕ *Killed in action* at Tweefontein, Dec. 25, 1901.

6257 **Harmer, J.**, Tpr.

Corpl., Maitland. Sergt., May 25, 1900. † *Wounded* in leg, near Middlesex Kopje, Klip Nek, June 13, 1900. Invalided home and obtained a Commission in Police or New I.Y. and returned to South Africa. Now in Driscoll's Scouts. Old Regular, 19th Hussars.

6280 **Hayward, E.**, Tpr., F. Sect. IV., 25, Hurstway Street, Notting Hill.

Transferred to Military Police and detached to 16th Brigade on General Campbell's Brigade Staff, June 10, 1900. Fell ill for two months at end of campaign, but returned with Company from Harrismith on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901. Old Artilleryman. Eleven years in India.

6343 **Heenan, Claude R.**, Tpr., F. Sect. I, 9, Clifton Gardens, Twickenham.

† *Wounded* at Fouriesburg Mill in biceps, February 20, 1901; also shot through his hat. Rejoined Company as soon as wound was healed at Modderpoort, March 31, 1901. Remained at Harrismith to join New I.Y. and obtained a Commission, Gazette, Aug. 23, 1901. Survived Tweefontein.

6466 **Hely, Ernest**, Tpr., 33, South Street, Thurloe Square, S.W.

Lance-Corpl. Captured at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Cleverly escaped from Boer prison at Nootgedacht. Joined Gordon's Cavalry Brigade S.E. of Middleburg. Obtained a Commission in another corps. Promoted Captain, &c.

6231 **Hearne, F.**, Tpr., Royal Hotel, Aldershot.

Left Vrede for Standerton with Cowan. Returned to Company with Cowan *via* Ladysmith to Bethlehem, Sept. 25, 1900. Left Company for home Nov., 1900.

6378 **Herring, W.**, Tpr., Crews Hill, Clay Hill, Enfield.

Officer's Servant. Rode in Firing Line for a short while.

6282 **Hicks, A. D.**, Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., Euston Tavern, 73, Euston Road, London, N.W.

Assistant Cook. Rode in Firing Line for a few months. Officer's Servant. Returned home with details *via* Bethlehem and Harrismith, June, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

6379 **Hobbs, E. L.**, Saddler, F. Sect. I/I., Malmesbury, Wilts.

Saddler to 34th Company. Occasionally rode in Firing Line. Old Regular, 18th Hussars. Fell ill at Harrismith Dec., 1900, and was invalided home.

6283 **Holmes, G.**, Corpl., late of Chingford, Essex.

Fell ill in April or May, and was detached from 34th and attached to another Company. ✕ *Killed in action* at Kroonstad, July 25, 1900. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

6247 **Hornecastle, A. A.**, Trumpeter, F. Sect. II/IV/II., Wallerscote, Upminster, Essex.

Left ill Jan., 1901. Invalided home. Obtained temporary Commission in Remounts Dept.

**House, Dr.**, Poplar Hospital.

Battalion Staff Surgeon.

— ? **Howlett, Corpl.**, F. Sect. III., 73, Wandsworth Road, Vauxhall.

Left Company at Maitland, April, 1900. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

6363 **Hunt, John**, Tpr., 10, Lillie Road, S. Kensington.

Assistant Butcher. Rode in ranks for a period. Water-cart driver. Transferred to Gun Section. Remained with and came home with the Company on ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901.

6285 **Ingram, T.**, Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., 1, Lewes Crescent, Brighton.

† *Accidentally wounded* in the leg by cartridges exploding in the camp fire, May, 1900, at Leeuwfontein. Went into hospital at Thaba N'chu, seven weeks at Bloemfontein, went down to Cape Town, joined details, returned to front with drafts to Lindley, Kroonstad, Bethlehem, in action at Bulfontein and Schlacter's Nek. With Macdonald's Brigade at Naauwpoort Nek. Rejoined Company at Harri Smith, Aug. 6, 1900. Left Company by special permit for home, Nov., 1900.

6284 **Isard, Alf.**, Tpr., Essex Wharf, Lea Bridge, Clapton.

Drove the Company Waggon from Maitland to Nov., 1900. Joined Firing Line. † *Severely wounded* in arm near Senekal, January 2, 1901, and could not rejoin. Left for Winburg, Jan. 11, 1901.

6367 **Jacoby, Henry**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., 18, Aldermanbury, London, E.O., or Greenheys, Manchester.

Left ill at Senekal, Jan. 11, 1901. Rejoined Company June 9, 1901, and returned with Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

6318 **Kelsey, J. H.**, Tpr., F. Sect. IV/II., 210, Evering Road, Upper Clapton, London.

In Firing Line till late in campaign. Acted as Cook to Company for two months *vice* J. Edwards, April 7, 1901. Returned home with the Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901.

**Kennard, E. C. H.**, Lieut., Grenadier Guards.

Lieut., Section II., 34th Co., Army List, Feb. 3, 1900. † *Wounded* in the face and leg at Senekal, May 25, 1900. Invalided home from Winburg. Late Lieut. Grenadier Guards. Etonian. Matabele Medal.

6312 **Kirby, G.**, Corpl., 8, Wiesbaden Road, Stoke Newington.

Left Company for home at Harri Smith in October, 1900. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

2291 **Langley, F.**, Regt. Qr.-Mstr.-Sergt.-Major, 1, Cathcart Road, South Kensington.

Battalion Staff, not in Firing Line. Old Regular, 17th Lancers. Twenty-three years' service. Zulu War. Medal. Eleven years in India. Obtained Hon. Commission as Qr.-Mstr., 1901. Remained in Harri Smith to join New I.Y. Captured at Tweefontein and released.



- 6815 **Lee, F. J. B.**, Tpr., F. Sect. I., Fairfield West, Kingston-on-Thames.  
Prisoner at Senekal, May 25, 1900. Returned to Company at Bethlehem, Sept. 25, 1900. Left ill at Harrismith, Nov., 1900, and invalided home. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- 6852 **Lee, T.**, Tpr., Mrs. Lee, 1, Clarence Road, Bohemia, St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex.  
Prisoner at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Returned to Company at Bethlehem, Sept. 25, 1900. Much weakened by imprisonment at Nootgedacht. Company Cook for a short while. Caught a chill at Clocolan, April 2, 1901. ✕ Died of enteric at Picksburg, April 15, 1901.
- 6287 **Longley, T. J.**, Tpr., F. Sect. II/I., 7, Bedford Road, Horsham, Sussex.  
Left Company at Harrismith, Nov., 1900. Invalided.
- 6288 **Lunn, Wm.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., 357, Strand, London, W.C.  
Left Company ill at Harrismith, invalided home, Nov., 1900. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- ? **Mackay, Sergt.**  
Left Company at Knightsbridge, Feb., 1900, and joined ranks of 35th Company.
- 6339 **Marriott, T.**, Tpr., F. Sect. IV/II., c/o J. Marriott, The Strait, Lincoln.  
Company Butcher. Assistant Division Butcher. Returned to Firing Line as Trooper, Feb. 17, 1901, at Harrismith, and came home with the Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July, 18, 1901.
- 4227 **McDonnell, J. R.**, Tpr., Rydens, Rydens Park, Walton-on-Thames.  
Appointed on Military Police. Left as M. P. at Reitz, on Oct. 12, 1900. Rejoined Company at Reitz, Dec. 7, 1900. Obtained a Commission and left Company at Elands River Bridge, Jan. 23, 1901, to join Police.
- 6290 **McIlwraith, J. G.**, Sergt., F. Sect. IV/II., son of A. McIlwraith, Esq., Campbellfield, St. Albans, Herts.  
Reverted voluntarily at Maitland in April, 1900. Captured at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Returned to Firing Line at Harrismith, Oct. 14, 1900. Left ill at Reitz, Dec. 7, 1900. ✕ Died of enteric, Dec. 17, 1900. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- 6291 **McIlwraith, J. H.**, Corpl., F. Sect. IV/II., son of A. McIlwraith, Esq. (younger brother of above J. C.).  
Reverted voluntarily at Maitland, April, 1900. Left ill at Sterkfontein, Jan. 5, 1901, for hospital. ✕ Died of enteric at Winburg, Jan. 22, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- 6259 **McKechnie, G.**, Tpr., F. III II., 8, Whellock Road, Bedford Park, W.  
Servant to Capt. Brune. Left Company when Capt. Brune left, Jan. 25, 1901. Not in Firing Line. Experience in Morocco. Temporary Commission in New I. Y., 1902.
- 6331 **Meek, F. W.**, Farrier Sergt., Church Green, Romsey, Hants.  
Captured at Senekal, May 25, 1900. Went home on release in August. Old Regular.

6368 **Melkie, J. H.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., Lochlibo, Jeamond, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Left Company ill at Thaba-Patachoa for Bloemfontein, March 28, 1901. Returned to Harrismith, but came home with details, July, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

**Mitford, W. Kenyon, C.M.G.**, Pithill, Petworth, Sussex.

Colonel of 11th Battalion I.Y. from January 20, 1900, to August, 1900. Went home, September, 1900. Mentioned in Lord Roberts's List, Sept. 4, 1901. Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, Sept. 27, 1901. Lieut.-Colonel. Medals: Afghan, Jubilee, and Order of St. John of Jerusalem. Late 8th Hussars. Colonel of the Middlesex Co. Yeomanry.

6368 **Morgan, J. G. Y. D.**, Tpr., III/II., Effingham House, Crawley, Sussex.

Corpl., Senekal, May 25th. † *Wounded* in face and shoulder, Nov. 19, 1900, near Newmarket. Invalided home from Harrismith, Nov. 30, 1900.

6317 **Morgan, R.**, Tpr., 153, Bow Road, E.

Corpl. *vice* Grumley, Sergt. Left ill at Willow Grange, July 23, 1900. Returned at Harrismith, August 7, 1900. Left ill again, and finally joined details at Bethlehem until June, 1901. South African experience, previously.

6316 **Morris, L. A.**, Tpr., F. Sect. IV/II., 7, Langham Mansions, Earls Court Square, S.W.

Broke his arm when his horse fell, near Newmarket, Nov. 19, 1900. Invalided home from Harrismith, Nov. 30, 1900. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

6292 **Morris, W.**, Tpr., III., 8, Ringcroft Street, Highbury, N.

Left at Maitland as Base Storeman, March 30, 1900. Old Regular. Medal and two clasps for Soudan, '84; was at "Abu Klea." Promoted Staff-Sergeant.

6248 **Musthin, J.**, Tpr., Appletree Yard, St. James', S.W.

Detached from Company to become General Rundle's orderly, and held the appointment until the Company went home, July, 1901. Old Regular.

6318 **Nancarrow, S. H.**, Corpl., F. Sect. IV., 228, Stookwell Road, Brixton.

Reverted April 12, 1900. Did not go to the front, left Company on the way up. On Military Railways subsequently.

6260 **Napier, Baill**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., son of Honble. Mark Napier, Puttenden Manor, Lingfield, Surrey.

Promoted Corpl. in Knightsbridge Barracks, Jan., 1900. Sergt. at Senekal, May 25, 1900. Commission, Harrismith, Dec. 1, 1900. † *Wounded*, wrist and stomach, outside Senekal, Dec. 27, 1900. † *Died* of wounds at Senekal, Dec. 28, 1900. Buried in the Senekal Cemetery, next to Dalbiac.

**Newnham, Charles G.**, Auchindinny House, Milton Bridge, Midlothian. Indian address—Nowgong, Central India, VI. Bengal Cavalry.

Lieut. 34th Co. Led the reorganised Sect. II. from Klip Nek, June 18, 1900. Left the Company under order to return to India at Harrismith, Nov. 2, 1900. Captain of 6th Bengal Cavalry, Central Provinces, India. Medal for Tirah Campaign; three clasps. Appointed to the Indian Coronation Contingent 1902.

6293 **Nisell, W.**, Sergt., 62, Perrymead Road, Parsons Road, Fulham, London.

Captured at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Escaped at Bethlehem, O.R.C. Appointed Sergt. in charge of I.Y. stores for Division, 1900. Remained at Harrismith until June, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

4251 **Nutt, G. J.**, Tpr., 55, Harewood Road, Fulham.

Went into Hospital, did not get to the front. No information.

4229 **Oppe, A.**, Tpr., Gun Section. Pamber, Basingstoke.

Transferred as Tpr. to 34th Co. Left ill at Ficksburg, June 20, 1900. Afterwards rejoined 34th Firing Line. Invalided home from Harrismith, Dec., 1900.

6319 **Ouvry, E. G.**, Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., 2, Devonport Street, Hyde Park, W.

Corpl., May 25, 1900, Senekal. Signaller of Battalion. Travelled in Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, &c. Invalided home at Harrismith, Dec., 1900.

6356 **Palmer, A. P.**, Tpr., F. Sect. IV/II., Seaton, Devon.

Commission Oct. 12, 1900. † *Slightly wounded* at Reitpan, Jan. 6, 1901. Thrice shot through clothes, Reitpan, Jan. 6, and Fouriesburg Mill, Feb. 20, 1901. Left Company at Thaba Patachoa, Warringham Store, March 17, 1901. Joined S. African Police at Bloemfontein. Promoted Captain in S.A.C. In Lord Roberts's List of Recommendations for Meritorious Services, Sept. 4, 1901. Companion of the Distinguished Service Order, Sept. 27, 1901, Gazette. Remained in South Africa. Relinquished his I.Y. Commission, Gazette, of Aug. 23, 1901. Experience in U. S., British Columbia, and Australia.

6251 **Paparritor, P.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/I., 288, Bury New Road, Higher Broughton, Manchester. Remained in Firing Line with Company throughout the Campaign. Remained at Elandsfontein on the Company's way home, June 16, 1901, to join a new Company of Police. Old Regular, 10th Hussars. Experience in Greece.

6320 **Paterson, W.**, Tpr., 37, Westor Road, Putney, S.W.

Appointed Assistant under Sergt. Nicoll at the I.Y. Stores at Harrismith from August, 1900. Now in Corps of Ranchers at Pretoria.

2348 **Peacock, E.**, Regt. Sergt.-Major, 8, Gunter Grove, Fulham, S.W.

Battalion Staff. Returned with details, July, 1901. Old Regular, 8th Hussars. Permanent Staff of Middlesex County Yeomanry, Rutland Yard.

**Peacocks, C. L.**, Lieut. Gun Section.

Formerly Royal Artillery. Subsequently Staff and Base appointments. Scarcely anything to do with Company 34. Now Second in Command of New Imperial Yeomanry Battalion.

6250 **Perry, R.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III., 96, Queensland Road, Holloway, N.

Old Regular. Left ill at Thaba N'ochu, May, 1900. Did not reach the front. Officer's Servant.

6362 **Philipps, H. D.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., 2A, Haverhill Road, Balham, S.W.

Ill, enteric, Ficksburg, Feb., 1901. Promoted Corpl. at Ficksburg, April 14, 1901. Sergt. in new Imperial Yeomanry. Remained in S.A. Survived Tswfontein. Returned home, June, 1902. Experience: 2½ years in India; 4 years in South Africa.

6351 **Pyecroft, J.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III., Winchester Road, Worthing.

Officer's Servant to Lieut. Wallis from Knightsbridge Barracks, becoming detached for that purpose, but rejoined the Firing Line and rode with Company for some time. Left ill, Jan., 1901.

6294 **Ralli, E. L.**, Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., 2, Park Street, London, W.

Promoted Corpl., Dec. 10, 1900. † Wounded in night attack, in forearm, April 8/4, 1901. Rode in Firing Line again as soon as wound was healed. Remained with Company throughout campaign but took private passage home, July, 1901. Etonian.

6323 **Reid, W. H.**, Bugler, 45, Harlington Road, London.

Did not go to the front. Invalided. Attached to Maitland Base Depôt, April 1, 1900. Embarked for England, June 11, 1900. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

6261 **Richards, T. W.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., The Chalcoots, England Lane, Hampstead, N.W.

Taken Prisoner at Senekal, May 25, 1900. Rejoined Company on release at Bethlehem, Sept. 25, 1900. Officer's Servant, but always rode in the Firing Line. Returned with Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901. Cavalryman short time.

6468 **Ridge, T. J.**, Tpr., 2, Montague Place, Russell Square, W.C.

Left at Bloemfontein, May 2, 1900. Rejoined at Senekal, and invalided from Klip Nek, June, 1900. Experience in Australia.

6354 **Rhodes, G.**, Tpr., F. Sect. II/I., next of kin, mother (Mrs. Lange, Siddons House, Clarence Gate, N.W.).

✝ Killed in action, Cornelis River, Nov. 6, 1900.

6295 **Roberts, A. C.**, Tpr., F. Sect. II., 9 & 10, Pancras Lane, Queen Street, E.C.

Left at Bloemfontein, May 2, 1900. Rejoined Company at Senekal, May 28, 1900. Made Corpl., July 23, 1900. Left ill at Thaba Patschoa (Warringtons' Store), March 28, 1901. Rejoined Company at Ficksburg, April 15, 1901. Promoted Sergt., April, 1901. Returned with details, June, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

6361 **Robertson, R. W.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III., 28, Broad Street, Peterhead.

Captured, Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Released and remained at Pretoria for rest of campaign.

6337 **Robinson, A. E.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III/II., c/o Mrs. Browne, 23, St. Aubyn's Road, Upper Norwood.

Cook to Company at Maitland. Officer's Servant and Mess Cook. Not in Firing Line. Invalided home, Jan., 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

**6322 Roller, G. C., Company Sergt.-Major, Tadly, Basingstoke.**

Mentioned in despatches. Recommended by General Rundle for a V.C. and Commission after Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Commission confirmed at Klip Nek, July, 1900. Went home from Harrismith Nov. 1, 1900. Lord Roberts's List of Recommendations for Meritorious Services, Sept. 4, 1901. Distinguished Conduct Medal, Gazette, Sept. 27, 1901. Mentioned in General Rundle's Farewell Speech coupled with Dalbiac, Harrismith, June 13, 1901. With Thornton made a most gallant capture of a Boer at Bethlehem, Sept. 22, 1900. Formerly Sergt.-Major in Old Middlesex Co. Yeomanry of twenty years' service. Now Captain in Middlesex Co. I.Y. Experience in Australia, Peru, and Argentine.

**6327 Scott, Eric Clement, Tpr., F. Sect. IV/II., 15, Woburn Square, London. W.C.**

Fall ill of enteric at Vrede, Nov., 1900, and invalided home. Experience in United States.

**6328 Scott, F. W., Corpl., F. Sect. I., made Sergt. Sect. IV., Henbury Manor, Wimborne, Dorset.**

Sergt., Maitland, April, 1900. Captured at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Returned to Firing Line at Harrismith, Oct. 14, 1900. † Wounded in arm at Cornelis River, Nov. 20, 1900. Invalided home from Harrismith, Nov. 30, 1900. Late Lieut. Scots Greys. Experience in Australia three years. Etonian.

**6369 Scott, T. Allison, Tpr., F. Sect. II/II., son of T. H. Scott, Esq., Grove House, Filey, Yorks.**

Orderly to Major Dalbiac until May 25, 1900. Left ill of enteric at Winburg Hospital, Dec. 24, 1900. † Died of enteric at Winburg, Dec. 30, 1900.

**6296 Shells, F. W., Sergt., Sect. I., late of Orpington, Kent.**

† Killed in action at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Sergt. in old Middlesex Co. Yeomanry. Experience in Australia.

**4242 Shipley, T., Tpr., F. Sect. II., Cobham Stud Farm, Surrey.**

Staff Servant. Invalided home, November, 1900.

**6461 Smart, Percy John, Tpr., F. Sect. IV. (brother of F. Smart), High Street, Steyning, Sussex.**

Entered Gun Section from 34th ranks just after joining Company. Remained with Gun Section until Thaba Patschoa (Warringham Store), where he took enteric fever and † Died April 15, 1901.

**6326 Smyth, F., Tpr., F. Sect. II/I., 24, Monmouth Road, Westbourne Grove, Bayswater.**

Left Company very ill, October, 1900. Latterly Doctor's Servant. Invalided home, Jan., 1901. Experience: Four years in S. Africa; Mining Experience at Johannesburg.

**4249 Stephen, W. A., Tpr., Gun Section, 62, Queenagate, Kensington.**

Left Gun Section in March, 1901, at Warringham, very ill of enteric. Invalided home from Harrismith, May or June, 1901.

— ? Stewart, attached Imperial Yeomanry "Scout."



**6324 Sturgeon, G., Tpr.**

No information. Not in Firing Line of 34th. Left at Maitland. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

**6302 Thornton, C., Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., 1, Mount Street, London, W.**

Promoted Lance-Corpl. (Senekal), May 25, 1900. † *Wounded* in forearm near Newmarket, Nov. 7, 1900. Invalided home from Harrismith, Nov. 30, 1900. With Roller he captured a Boer under very gallant circumstances at Bethlehem, Sept. 22, 1900. Travelled in several countries. Rugby and Cambridge. Double Blue.

**6348 Tomlin, R., Sergt., G. Sect. III., 18, Abingdon Villas, Kensington, W.**

Captured at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Went home, embarked for England, Oct. 25, 1900. Old Regular. Corpl. of the Blues.

**6388 Tomlinson, T. J., Tpr., F. Sect. IV/II., Aden Hall, Durham.**

Transferred to Gun Section. Left Company ill at Harrismith, Nov., 1900. Remained a short while as detail at Harrismith and joined another branch of service. Experience in Klondyke and Canada.

**6397 Unwin, R., Tpr., late of Santiago, Chili. Son of Geo. Unwin, Esq., Haldersley, Spencer Road, Buxton.**

✱ *Killed in action* at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. A short time Lieut. in Chilian Army. Born and educated in Chili.

**Wake, Capt.**

Lieut. Sect. II. Co. 34, for a short while at Knightsbridge, in charge of the test shooting. Ordered to rejoin his old Regiment, 10th Hussars.

**6330 Walker, Geo. Allen, Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., 154, Eastern Road, Brighton,**

† *Wounded* in arm at Fouriesburg Mill on Feb. 20, 1901. Rode in ranks a week after, but was taken ill of rheumatism at Warringham Store (Thaba Patschoa). Invalided for Bloemfontein and home on March 28, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman. Experience in Canada six years, Australia two years, and in many other parts of the world.

**6399 Walker, N. O., Tpr., F. Sect. I., 20, Queensgate Gardens, South Kensington, W.**

Captured at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Rejoined Company at Bethlehem, Sept. 25, 1900. Sergt.-Major Cowan's Clerk for period. Corpl. at Ficksburg, March 30, 1901. Left Company at Fouriesburg in charge of kits on May 27, 1901. Left Harrismith for home with details, June, 1901.

**— ? Wallis, Farrier-Sergt., F. Sect. III.**

Joined 34th Co. as Farrier-Sergt., but obtained a Vet. Lieut.'s Commission at Knightsbridge, Feb., 1900. Promoted Vet. Capt. In charge of the Remount Department of Brigade. Experience in Canada. Remained at the front, and was commended in Lord Kitchener's despatch, June 23, 1902.

**Walsh, Hon. G. W.**

Lieut. Sect. I. 34th Co., Army List, Feb. 8, 1900. Taken ill at Bester's Flats, May 22, 1900, and invalided home. Late Lieut. Grenadier Guards.

- 6263 **Walton, H.**, Tpr., 9, Grove Cottages, Manor Street, Chelsea.  
Capt. Walsh's Servant. Left at Bester's Flats, May 22, 1900.
- 6298 **Webster, G.**, Tpr., F. Sect. III., Lynthorpe House, West Norwood.  
† Wounded in leg, Senekal Town, May 25, 1900. Rode up wounded to top of kopje. Invalided home. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- 4246 **Weedon, F. J.**, Shosing Smith, F. Sect. III/II., 2, Randolph Mews, Maida Hill, W.  
Captured at Senekal Kopje, May 25, 1900. Returned to Company at Bethlehem, Sept. 25, 1900. Left ill at Senekal for Winburg, Jan. 2, 1901. Left for Winburg from Senekal, Jan. 11, 1901. Invalided home.
- 4247 **Weedon, H.**, Shosing Smith, F. Sect. I. (brother of above), 2, Randolph Mews, Maida Hill, W.  
Farrier-Sergt., vice Meek taken prisoner, May 25, 1900. Left ill at Ficksburg, May, 1901.
- 6416 **Welsberg, Harry**, Tpr., F. Sect. III., 2, The Mansions, Bramham Gardens, S.W.  
† Wounded at Senekal Kopje in arm, May 25, 1900. Rejoined the Company at Harrismith, Oct. 22, 1900. Returned with Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901.
- 6329 **Willahin, E. V.** (junr.), Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., Elsinore, Dyke Road, Brighton, Sussex.  
Brother of above. Remained with Company and returned with Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901. Tunic pocket shot through at Fouriesburg, Feb. 20, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- 6328 **Willahin, T. J.** (senr.), Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., Elsinore, Dyke Road, Brighton, Sussex.  
Fell from horse at Klip Nek; hurt. Remained with Company and returned with Company on board ss. *Manchester Merchant*, July 18, 1901. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- 6300 **Wilson, R. T.**, Tpr., F. Sect. I/I., 5, Northcote Road, St. Margaret's-on-Thames, Middlesex.  
Officer's Servant on Staff. Joined Firing Line, Sept., 1900. Left ill at Reitz, Nov., 1900. Invalided home. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.
- 6377 **Wood, F.**, Sergt.-Cook on Battalion Staff, "Gardeners' Arms," Ingleton Street, Brixton.  
Ill of dysentery and enteric at Harrismith. ✕ Died there, Dec. 27, 1900. Old Regular. Old Middlesex Co. Yeoman.

#### GUN SECTION ATTACHED TO 84TH COMPANY.

**Peacocke**, Lieut., see Index 84th Company names.

4321 **Baker, H. C.**, Tpr. Left early.

4256 **Bickerton, W.**, Tpr., 34, Calthorpe Street, W.C. Left at Reitz ill.

4261 **Burt, H.**, Tpr., 88, Church Street, Soho. Left early.

4255 **Campbell, N.**, Tpr.       "               "               "

- 4241 Ganny, H., Tpr., see Index of 84th Company names.  
 4243 Day, H., Tpr., " " "  
 4240 Dixon, W. G., Sergt., " " "  
 4234 Evans, J., L.-Corpl., " " "  
 4407 Fawcett, J. "  $\dagger$  Died of enteric.  
 4232 Hall, S. E., " see Index of 84th Company names.  
 4264 Lukey, F., Corpl. Left early.  
 4239 Oppe, A., Tpr., see Index of 84th Company names.  
 6461 Smart, P., Tpr., " " "  
 4249 Stephen, W., Tpr., " " "  
 4392 Wood, A. Left early.  
 4263 Wynn, M. C. "

#### BATTALION STAFF AND SERVANTS NOT RIDING IN FIRING LINE.

- 2348 Peacock, H., Regt. Sergt.-Major, see Index of 84th Company names.  
 2291 Langley, F., Regt. Qr.-Mstr.-Sergt.-Major, see Index of 84th Company names.  
 6377 Wood, F., Sergt.-Cook.  $\dagger$  Died. See Index of 84th Company names.  
 6411 Anthony, W., Tpr., 13, Queen's Road, Peckham, see Index of 84th Company names.  
 4226 Davy, A., Tpr., 3, Redcar Street, Highgate. Col. Mitford's Groom. Returned with details.  
 6306 Hides, E., Tpr., detached, Officer's Servant, Orderly Room Sergt. Temporary Commission as Qr.-Mstr. in new I.Y.  
 2727 Hillier, T., Tpr., detached. No information.  
 4269 James, N., Tpr., Lockerley Hall, Romsey, Hants. Detached. Servant to Captain Dalgetty.  
 4248 Jones, R., Tpr., 149A, Clapham Road, S.W. Left early. Clerk, Orderly Room.  
 6455 Lane, W., Tpr., Welbeck Abbey, Nottingham. Colonel's Servant. Came home, Aug., 1900.  
 4223 McMullen, J., Tpr., detached. No information.  
 4252 Pember, J., Tpr., Stagsden House, Bournemouth. Detached, servant.  
 6351 Pyecroft, J., Tpr., see Index of 84th Company names.  
 4266 Phillips, W. H., Tpr., Clayfield House, Twyford, Winchester. Detached. Doctor's Servant. Left early.  
 6363 Ramshaw, R., Tpr., Hinchcliffe, Durham. Detached. Cook to Officers' Mess.  $\dagger$  Died South Africa.

- 6856 **Ridnell, H.**, 4, Catherine Street, Buckingham Gate. Left early.  
Servant to Qr.-Mstr.
- 4258 **Smith, W. H.**, Tpr., 118, Wandsworth Bridge Road. Sometime  
Corpl. in Qr.-Mstr.-Sergt.'s Department.
- 2652 **Turnbull, H.**, Tpr., 1, Eaton Grove, Wedmore Street, Upper  
Holloway. Old 15th Hussars. Officer's Servant (to Captains Wallis  
and Roller). Returned with latter.
- 4258 **Wyatt, A.**, Tpr., Swinfen, Lichfield. Detached.  
Coad, Corpl. W. Kent man attached to Battalion Staff. † Died  
of enteric, Elands River Bridge, Jan. 23, 1901.

#### HITS IN THE 34TH COMPANY.

- Agnew, H. M.**, through bandolier and belt, Senekal, May 25, 1900.
- Weisberg**, through waterbottle at Senekal, May 25, 1900.
- Gray**, through tunic and shirt near Newmarket, Nov. 19, 1900.
- Boughton**, grazed on finger by bullet, Senekal, Dec. 16, 1900.
- Baker** and another man through cloaks.
- Palmer**, through breeches and waterbottle at Rietpan, Jan. 6, 1901.
- „ „ shoulder-strap at Fouriesburg Mill, Feb. 20, 1901.
- Heenan**, through hat at Fouriesburg Mill, Feb. 20, 1901.
- Willshin, E. V.**, junr., through tunic pocket near Fouriesburg, Feb. 20, 1901.
- About twenty-five horses killed in action by bullets.

Early in February, 1901, a number of Infantry of the Line were recruited into their Mounted Infantry Companies, but for training purposes many of them were attached to the various I.Y. Companies of the 11th Battalion. Of those attached to 34th Company I took a list, but found it almost undecipherable at the end of the campaign. I believe the following to be almost complete, two or three names of the Worcesters being missing:—

South Staffordshire Regiment Infantry—Corpl. Brierley, Ptes. Alsbury (wounded), Baker (died), Curtis (died), Casey, Cook, Evans, Harding, Hartley, Lawley (died), Shafer.

Worcester Regiment Infantry—?

## APPENDIX III

### CASUALTIES OF THE 34th CO. I. Y.

#### *Killed in Action or Died of Wounds.*

Dalbiao, H. S., Major, May 25, 1900, at Senekal.  
Shells, F. W., Sergt., May 25, 1900, at Senekal.  
Unwin, R., Tpr., May 25, 1900, at Senekal.  
Deane, H. S., Tpr., May 25, 1900, at Senekal.  
Grout, G. G., Tpr., June 18, 1900, near Klip Drift Nek.  
Holmes, C., Corp. (detached), July 25, 1900, at Kroonstad.  
Rhodes, G., Tpr., November 6, 1900, at Cornelis River.  
Napier, B., Lieut., December 28, 1900, at Senekal.  
Hall, S. E., Capt., December 25, 1901, at Tweefontein.  
Agnew, H. M., Lieut., December 25, 1901, at Tweefontein.

#### *Drowned.*

Boughton, J. C., Tpr., April 2, 1901, at Clocolan.

#### *Died of Sickness—Enteric where not otherwise stated.*

McIlwraith, J. C., Tpr., December 17, 1900, at Reits.  
Scott, T. A., Tpr., December 30, 1900, at Winburg.  
Fortescue, C. E., Tpr., January 2, 1901, at Winburg.  
Blyth, W. E., Tpr., January 12, 1901, at Winburg.  
McIlwraith, J. H., Tpr., January 22, 1901, at Winburg.  
Blount, C. W., Tpr., February 16, 1901, at Mooi River.  
Lee, T., Tpr., April 15, 1901, Ficksburg.  
Smart, P., Tpr. (Gun Sect.), April 15, 1901, at Warringham's Store.  
Bradley, E. A., Tpr., May 31, 1901, at Ficksburg.  
Fawcett, J. (Gun Sect.), detached, particulars not to hand.

#### *Died of Sickness—Enteric where not otherwise stated.*

#### BATTALION STAFF (attached to 34th).

Wood, F., Sergt. Cook, Dec. 27, 1900, at Harrismith.  
Coad, Corp. (36th Co.), January 22, 1901, at Elands River Bridge.  
Ramshaw, R., Tpr. (detached), particulars not to hand.



*Wounded (34th Co.).*

Agnew, H. M., Corp., through arm, May 25, 1900, at Senekal.  
 Webster, G., Tpr., through leg, May 25, 1900, at Senekal.  
 Weisberg, H., Tpr., through arm, May 25, 1900, at Senekal.  
 Kennard, E. C. H., Lieut., through face and leg, May 25, 1900, at Senekal.  
 Harmer, J., Sergt., through leg, June 13, 1900, near Klip Drift.  
 Banks, J., Tpr., through chest over heart, June 13, 1900, near Klip Drift.  
 Barton, F. W., Corp., through leg and shoulder, Sept. 22, 1900, at Bethlehem.  
 Groome, R., Tpr., through hip, Sept. 28, 1900, at Elandskop.  
 Thornton, C., Corp., through forearm, Nov. 7, 1900, near Newmarket.  
 Edwards, J., Tpr., through scalp, Nov. 9, 1900, near Vrede.  
 Morgan, J. G. Y. D., Corp., through face and shoulder, Nov. 19, 1900, near Newmarket.  
 Gray, F. C., Lieut., through elbow, Nov. 19, 1900, near Newmarket.  
 Scott, F. W. Sergt., through forearm, Nov. 20, 1900, near Cornelis River.  
 Denman, Lord (then Captain of 35th Co.), through leg, Nov. 20, 1900, near Cornelis River.  
 Izard, A., through bone of arm, January 2, 1901, at Senekal.  
 Palmer, A. P., Lieut., slightly, in thigh, January 6, 1901, at Rietpan.  
 Heenan, C. R., Tpr., through arm, February 20, 1901, near Fouriesburg.  
 Walker, G. A. Tpr., through forearm, February 20, 1901, near Fouriesburg.  
 Ralli, E. L., Corp. through forearm, April 3-4 (night attack), near Clocolan.

REGULAR STAFFORDS M. I. (attached to 34th Co. from February, 1901).

*Wounded.*

Alsby, Pte., through lungs, February 18, 1901, at General's Nek.  
 (Unknown name) Pte., through body, February 19, 1901, near Fouriesburg.

*Died of Sickness.*

Baker, Pte., enteric, particulars unknown.  
 Lawley, Pte., pneumonia, March, 1901, at Warringham's Store.  
 Curtis, Pte., enteric, May 1, 1901, at Ficksburg.

*Captured at Senekal, May 25, 1900.*

*†Scott, F. W., Sergt.	*§Lee, T., Tpr.
*‡Nicoll, W., Sergt.	*§McIlwraith, J. C., Tpr.
Tomlin, R., Sergt.	*Richards, T. W., Tpr.
Meek, F. W., Farrier-Sergt.	Robertson, R. W., Tpr.
‡  Hely, E., Corp.	*Walker, N. O., Tpr.
*§Blyth, W. E., Tpr.	*Weedon, F. J., Tpr.
*Lee, F. J. B., Tpr.	

\* Returned to duty. † Afterwards wounded. ‡ Escaped. § Died of sickness. || Remained at Pretoria on duty.

## APPENDIX IV.

### IN THE ENEMY'S HANDS.\*

By TROOPER F. J. B. LEE.

**I**MEDIATELY after our surrender, on Friday, May 25, 1900, we prisoners and the wounded men were collected under cover—for firing from the few of our men in the town was still going on—and preparations for our further security were made by our captors.

It was necessary, however, that we should all have great-coats, and helmets were wanted too, by some of us who, although the sun was high, had been firing without them, for, while the helmets were of the best quality procurable, their shape rendered it impossible to fire at the prone position—they tilted forward so over the eyes. Firing soon slackened considerably, but the Boers still held the kopje overlooking the town. Farrier-Sergeant Meek and I were allowed, under escort, to return to the hill-top, for the purpose of getting these very necessary articles.

We first went to the Major and ascertained that he was really dead. We took his wrist-watch for his relatives, but were compelled to give it to our escort. Later in the day, as the result of a complaint to the Boer commandant, it was returned to Farrier-Sergeant Meek, who had it when I last saw him in September, 1900, at Pretoria, and who subsequently handed it to Colonel Dalbiac, M.P.

Poor Deane, too, who was near the Major, was dead. He had, that very morning, received his commission, and an unfinished letter to his mother was found in his wallet by our fellows.

We unstrapped from dead horses as many cloaks, mess-tins, and waterproof sheets as we could carry, and picked up helmets from the battle-ground, and then we returned to the other fellows, who were glad of the things we brought them.

Captain Kennard, shot through the face and knee, had been carried down in a blanket, and with the other wounded men was left in the town, as we were marched away on the Bethlehem Road.

The sun was still powerful, and soon we were glad to accept the offer of our escort to take our great-coats, &c., on their ponies. As we marched

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\* Believing that an account of the adventures of our thirteen unfortunate comrades who were captured at Senekal Kopje fight, May 25, 1900, would prove very interesting to most of us, the author applied to Trooper F. J. B. Lee. The narrative, following, is the result.

slowly along, sad and sorry enough, trying to realise the evil that had befallen us, one or other of our escort, which had, by now, doubled in strength, would try to engage us in conversation, a frequent question being, "Were we Brabants?" By the manner in which the question was put, we judged it just as well for us that we were not. Presently a young Boer, about eighteen, turned up, riding my mare, "Lassie." He spoke English fairly well. I was allowed to take my mess-tin and nose-bag from the saddle. This was, of course, a concession, and later in the day, when our spurs were taken from us, I saw that he got mine. Two months after, at the surrender of Prinaloo's commando (that which had just captured us), those very spurs were taken from a Boer, presumably this young fellow, by Corporal R. Morgan of ours, who was good enough to promise them to me after the campaign. They were stamped with my regimental number on the under side of the shank, and therefore were easily identified.

A march of five or six miles brought us to a small, low-lying post of the Boers, and as it was now dusk we concluded that our travel for the day would cease. It was ordered otherwise, however, for horses were brought us—our own where possible—and we commenced another march. Each prisoner had a man told off to guard him. My guard tied a rein to my horse's bit, and rode on my near side, holding it.

We started off in the darkness at a quick walk in double files. So fast did my guard set the pace that my English mare had to trot to keep alongside. This very fast walk, or amble, to give it its correct name, is much cultivated by the Boers, and its performance by their ponies is a source of pride to them. I judged that we moved at the rate of seven miles an hour; and so well trained are their ponies, that this speed can be maintained for many hours on end. My guard was talkative enough, but as he spoke in Dutch, conversation perforce flagged. Presently I caught the name "Delporte," addressed to a Boer who was riding independently up and down our column, and apparently in charge of us. Now, two days previously, when near Bester's Flat, it fell to me to visit a farm, "Templemore," belonging to a man of that name, who was on commando. The very substantial vrow who replied to my questionings, and sorrowed at my doings—I commandeered two cape carts and many eggs—did not know where her husband, nor her son, were. I guessed I knew now, and in order to satisfy myself, and, if possible by giving news, to make a friend at court, when Delporte rode up to the head of the small column again, I sang out, "Are you Delporte of Templemore?" He wheeled about and quickly replied in the affirmative. As he spoke English well, we talked of the farm, he riding alongside. I assured him that his wife was looking very fit; that three horses were then in the stable; that two tow-headed youngsters were still playing in the puddle by the "stook"; and that the ancient tramp, who said he was an Englishman hailing from Brighton, and was ninety-four years old, still hobbled to and fro from his hovel a mile away, to look after things generally in the absence of the "boss." These things interested him.

I did not speak of other matters—how one of his horses was at that moment left dead on Senekal Hill, and that a toothsome duck's leg was in my mess-tin, which leg had oft paddled in Templemore's muddy duck-pond.

Now and again a small group of horsemen would ride up out of the darkness, and a few low words would pass. They were Boer patrols. A few lights appeared ahead. It was the "laar" (laager), our destination for the night. Soon we rode into it, a straggling medley of waggons and heavily rugged ponies. Camp fires flickered in every open space, and squealing mules, knee-haltered, strayed about. Riding into the midst of a number of Cape carts, we were ordered to dismount, and our horses were taken from us. Then it was that I saw the last of my good mare, Lassie. She had been given me at Maitland Camp, and had carried me well and willingly.

Numbers of well-to-do-looking Boers now surrounded us, asking us questions, while a supper was being prepared, and extra blankets being found for the night, for it was bright and frosty. My acquaintance, Dalporte, now proved useful, and saw that I was well-provided for, and after I had supped from bread and meat, with coffee, we bade each other a very friendly "good-night." We were all very tired, having had reveille that morning at 3.30, and it was then near midnight; so we were soon asleep. Three or four sentries, huddled into all sorts of great-coats, with red or white handkerchiefs tied over their felt hats and under their chins, guarding us.

The intense ignorance of the rank and file of the Boers was remarkable. Naturally they were with us in equal ignorance of the course of the war in distant parts. What knowledge they did have was dealt to them by their superiors, who suppressed anything they considered would be likely to affect the *morale* of their commandos. We were not, therefore, so very much surprised to hear that Mafeking had fallen, and that Baden-Powell was a prisoner; that Buller was mortally wounded; that Lord Roberts was surrounded and in extremity. Besides, were not these interesting items in that single sheet of badly printed war news they triumphantly flourished at us? Remarking upon the number of small boys in the laager, ranging in age from ten to sixteen, around us, or playing a game something like our "rounders," we were given to understand that the English were capturing such and transporting them across the sea! It was not known why the English wanted them, only that it was so. Then Russia was attacking us, marching on London, and had already taken China *en route*, that country being just within the coast line, between it and the metropolis!

A piece of poetry, three stanzas long, was read to us with guttural gusto by a burly, red-whiskered German who had lost a finger in 1870, and who was by far the most malignant chuckler at our misfortunes. In it was this Russian bogey, believed in of all the commando.

A dark-whiskered and keen-looking fellow sidled up to me, as we were waiting for the mule-waggon, and after a few preliminaries said he intended to go over to the English as soon as he could. He had been in the country some years, but previously had been a corporal in Her Majesty's —th Hussars. He had been commandeered, but the Boers would not trust him in the firing-line, so he had to cook for them. Another man had been with Jameson in the Raid, where he was wounded, as he showed us, in the leg. Afterwards he was in the Bechuanaland Police.

Next morning, after breakfast, we were put into a mule-waggon, drawn

by ten excellent mules, for Bethlehem. The turn-out was the property of a Colonial Englishman who was, as he told us while riding alongside, in the enemy's employ.

The waggon set off at a good speed, and there was much shouting as we were jostled here and there, over ruts and ant-heaps. Incongruous as it may appear, we sung nearly all the way to Bethlehem, thirty miles distant. The rapid motion, two nights' good sleep, and sufficient food, had lightened our spirits. Then there was the distant boom of big guns; we might at any moment be rescued. Anyway, we determined to show a good face to the enemy, and so we cheered heartily as we left the laager.

Outspanning once on the way, we took the opportunity it offered for a wash in a spruit. We reached Bethlehem Courthouse at 6 o'clock p.m. Unlimited bully-beef, bread, and tobacco were ready for us. Those of us who hadn't pipes were supplied with them. Straw mattresses and blankets were piled in one corner. At 8 o'clock we turned in for the night. For the first time since leaving England in February we slept with a roof over our heads. This was on Saturday.

The next morning I successfully applied to the landrost for permission to attend the English Church for service, and at 10.30 four of us, with two armed guards, went to the church near by. Our entrance created some sensation, to be sure, but that did not detract from our enjoyment of the service, which was exactly the same as at home. In the afternoon the rector called upon us, in the presence of our guards, offering his good services. Under cover of general conversation he offered to post letters. This was indeed a boon, for we had been informed that all letters would be censored by the Free State officials. In the afternoon I wrote an account of the fight and my subsequent doings to the county paper, for the edification of my relatives and friends, and then, as directed by him, I pitched it over the wall into his back garden, when we were exercising in the courtyard. Four months later, after my release from imprisonment, I rejoined my company at this very town, and the first packet I opened, from among many which had accumulated, contained the issue of the paper in which this letter appeared!

The burghers who had accompanied us from the laager left us in charge of the four or five smart young fellows wearing the uniform of the Orange Free State Police, who were on duty at the Courthouse. This uniform consisted of a neat and well-fitting dark blue tunic—not unlike those worn by our police-inspectors at home—cord breeches, and field boots and spurs. All were armed with Colt revolvers. Around the soft felt hats was a band of orange silk, ornamented with a badge representing the arms of the State, a large, framed copy of which badge decorated the otherwise bare walls of the lofty Courthouse.

The landrost and field-cornet kindly allowed the English minister's wife to send in afternoon tea, and one or two young Englishmen who resided in the neighbourhood also obtained permission to visit us.

Those of us who were in want of new clothes were given them; in place of my riding breeches, which were ripped from the knee upwards, and were held together by tying a white handkerchief over the rent, I was given a beautiful pair of lavender-coloured bell-bottomed trousers! With these I was not obliged to wear my long mackintosh.



On the front door of our temporary prison was pasted a public proclamation in Dutch and English, referring to the "righteous war upon which the Republic and Free State had entered," and in which our Government was spoken of as a "so-called civilised power." On another door was stuck a plan of Spion Kop, showing the respective positions of the combatants on certain dates.

We were anxious that our relatives and friends at home should know what had become of us, for we knew that our names would be included in the very unsatisfactory list of "missing," until our authorities had definite knowledge of our whereabouts and condition. We mentioned this to the landroest, who was good enough to take a list of our names and regimental numbers, for the purpose of forwarding it to the Boer headquarters, with an accompanying request that they would communicate it to our own War Department.

For these and other much-appreciated kindnesses we drew up and signed a short testimonial, to the landroest and field-cornet, in appreciation of the favours conferred by them. It was as follows:—

"BETHLEHEM COURTHOUSE, O.V.S.

"May 28, 1900.

"We, the undersigned British prisoners of war, of the 34th Company, I.Y., beg to thank the landroest and field-cornet for the great consideration and kindness shown us."—Signed (The thirteen signatures followed).

It was felt, both by the recipients and signatories, that this testimonial might prove of service in the event of the British occupation of the town, especially if the question of treatment of prisoners of war should arise.

On the whole we spent a pleasant Sunday there, writing and reading, receiving visitors, or walking in the courtyard, where we were regarded with an amount of quiet interest by passers-by—Kaffirs and children mostly, no men being anywhere visible; they were away on commando.

The next morning, after a wash and breakfast, we were ordered to pack up for trekking. At first it was for Harrismith, then for Vrede: the former town, though being on the railway line for Pretoria, was threatened by one of our divisions. A bullock team drew up, and some of our former burgher guards around it. Two recently-killed sheep, in sacks, coffee, long rolls of bread, sugar, and a case of bully-beef were thrown in for our sustenance. We climbed aboard, and started for Vrede, which we reached without excitement or mishap in three days. Sergeant Nicoll and Trooper Weedon had been left behind, ill with dysentery, reducing our numbers to eleven.

It was nearly dark when we entered Vrede; but there was a small group of men outside Ross's Hotel when we pulled up. Several of our guard left us to go into the house, leaving one side of the bullock waggon free.

One or two Englishmen came alongside and gave a few words of cheer and encouragement, and a bottle of whiskey. This was quickly slid into Sergeant Scott's great-coat pocket, and, as we had not tasted anything in the shape of alcohol for months, its mere presence had a decidedly cheery anticipatory effect on several of us. We were then ordered into the parlour of the hotel, and glad enough we were, too, to leave our slow and

jolting conveyance. Besides, we were so cold and stiff from being cramped for many hours. To sit in a chair and in a well-lighted room, this alone was luxury! Then Mr. Ross, who was kindness personified, sent us in tobacco *ad lib.*, and with the promise of a good dinner, as soon as it could be prepared, we felt that the hardships of incessant trekking had some compensations.

How to discuss the hidden bottle of whiskey was the urgent question.

No stimulants allowed," said the guard, but glasses of water might be served, and, as our guards were standing outside the three or four doors, the forbidden bottle was produced and sampled by Scott, amidst breathless expectation. Then a sudden commotion and high words. The door flew open and the most villainous guard of all, rifle in hand, strode to where Scott was sitting, and snatched the precious bottle away, in a very ugly manner. It appeared that these evil-disposed burghers had been watching us through the skylight. They had climbed upon long bench seats outside the door to do this. Then, when the "cursed rooineks" were actually seen enjoying themselves, smoking and drinking spirits, their righteous anger was aroused. Ross was accused of serving us.

At this date Vrede was the headquarters of the Orange Free State Government. Some of the responsible officials—although Steyn, the President, was not—were staying at the hotel. Their spider waggons, cape carts, and other conveyances were seen as we entered the town. Several well-dressed men entered the room, looked at us intently, asked a few questions, and then withdrew. Dixon, or Dickson, said to be the Attorney General, and an Englishman, was among their visitors. He was typically British-looking, he was wearing a grey tweed cap, Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers. He said very little. We were as merry as crickets; in striking contrast, as it struck me then, to the Boer prisoners I had been escorting only a fortnight before.

Dinner was announced at last. As we left the parlour, which was a part of an annex to the hotel, and entered the street for the hotel dining-room, a crowd of people surrounded us, whose faces showed white and curious in the light from the open door. Nothing that we could understand was addressed to us, and the attitude towards us was that of sullen curiosity.

That dinner was a memorable one! Weren't we hungry! The delights of bright glass, polished silver, and clean plates! Epergnes, full of flowers, were charming graces, soothing to the dusty-eyed, valdt-wearied Britisher! Once again we ate like Christians, and passed the salt with an unfamiliar politeness. Around two tables, similarly decorated, were seated our shaggy-bearded and lank-haired guards, unwashed, or apparently so, with bandoliers still on, and rifles near by in the corner, or on the chair back. It was superfluous care. Small chance of our clearing away with that dinner before us! It would not be fair to say that our guards, one and all, did not know what to do with the various good courses set before them; for, as at our table, they disappeared rapidly; the nimble and noiseless oocle waiters had quite enough to do for a time. We partook of soup, fish, entrees, and joint, the latter being lamb with green peas. Fruit and coffee ended one of the most enjoyable meals.

As the hotel and school-house accommodation was already taken up by

the Government officials and their servants, it was announced that our beds for the night were to be laid in the gaol! This was unpleasant news, but where was the help for it?

The white stone building looked cold and uninviting enough in the bright moonlight, as we walked under the gateway. The quiet-speaking yet resolute-looking gaoler, an Englishman, named Woodley, met us, and showed us to our lodgings on "the cold, cold stones." The eleven of us were divided into two sleeping parties of five and six, and put into two cells. Those lacking blankets were supplied.

Woodley told us that there had been a big row at the hotel over the whiskey incident. Presently an Englishman, named Watson, was brought in by the police, highly excited and greatly profane. The appearance of some of his countrymen as prisoners of war and deprived of their liquor had upset him; he had been calling people and things by their wrong names in the hotel bar, thereby endangering the peace. Hence his incarceration, against which he clamoured long and loudly. We had nothing to give him for his complaint but our sympathy; and that, as an ameliorating influence, was not a success.

The authorities told off an Englishman, among others, as a guard, answerable for our appearance next morning. Seeing that we were already well secured, this appeared superfluous. Anyhow, by some means he had got hold of the forfeited bottle of whiskey, and before our cell was finally locked for the night, insisted upon seeing for himself that we were secure, declining to be held responsible otherwise. He merely looked in with the gaoler, before the latter locked us in, but that whiskey was under a blanket before the key was turned on us. We never saw him again, but he should live long and happily, for his health was frequently drunk, and with every good wish that night, nor will his practical sympathy ever be forgotten.

The occupants of the other cell, through Woodley's own forethought, also had a night-cap apiece.

The bang and clatter of the iron cell door, with the sliding of the long cross-bolt outside, were the most jarring sounds I have ever heard. Though the ceiling was lofty enough, it seemed at once to descend with stifling and depressing effect. But we were tired, well fed, had an empty bottle, and therefore soon asleep.

The lack of rest and the inclemency of the weather had affected Blyth, who complained of feeling unwell.

We were awakened by our good friend the gaoler, who had hot, fragrant coffee and estables ready for us. A wash in the yard refreshed us, and then we fell to inspecting our surroundings. The first thing I noted was a stout frame about 8 feet high by 4 feet broad, something very like a large picture easel. It was the whipping gallows, used when the cat was administered to native prisoners. Dark stains upon it showed here and there, and it seemed to have been in general use. At the gaol besides the head gaoler, Woodley, there was a staff of Kaffir policemen. One of them who swaggered around in an immense hyena-fur cap, and with knobkerries, assegais, &c., was quite the native warrior.

Two men of the Eastern Province Horse joined us as prisoners after breakfast; they had been captured near Lindley; their lieutenant,

Bertram, and the Central News War Correspondent, Graham, had stayed the night at Ross's hotel.

We were horrified to learn that in the gaol, *the same building*, was a leper, a native. His cell was the first on the right near the door. We did not see him.

We were struck by the peculiar brass pannikins which were issued us. Some months afterwards I got one from Woodley, when, with General Boyes' Brigade, *en route* from Standerton to Harrismith, we subsequently passed through Vrede.

From Vrede we trekked incessantly to Machadodorp by way of Standerton, and Ermelo where we passed the Boer Italian Commando, and Carolina. Sergeant Scott and Corporal Hely were both very ill by the way. Blyth had been left ill at Vrede.

We crossed the railway at Standerton, and it was strange to see a train again after so many months away from the rail. The road bridge over the Vaal River, opened by Kruger, was still intact. A large crowd awaited us outside the Courthouse yard in front of which the vierkleur was flying. Here, seemingly far away from war's alarm, we expected to make a long stay, and to rest. Everything pointed to this pleasing end; but suddenly a big, bearded, well-mounted veld-cornet rode into the courtyard, and peremptorily ordered us to remount the waggons. Food was pitched in, and away we went again, in less than five minutes.

At Machadodorp, then the headquarters of the Transvaal Government, we had a good meal. President Kruger, at the station, was then occupying a railway carriage coupled to an engine which always had steam up. Dismounting from the waggons in the square, we were soon surrounded by a crowd of burghers and others, among them being the U.S. attaché. Gentlemen of the Boer Irish Brigade also troubled us with offers of "drinks out of their mausers," and one in particular seemed at one time likely to fire into us. He was rather drunk, and our escort had to stop him; then he wanted to fight them. Another of the Brigade told us that he had left Ireland to fight against us, and had left his wife behind to do his work, which was that of keeping an asylum or infirmary clean.

Then we entrained for Nooitgedacht, which the facetious Tommy Atkins, in a hopeless moment, christened "Never-get-out." As it was dark when we reached Waterval Boven and Waterval Onder, we had not the pleasure of seeing the beautiful waterfalls there. On arriving at Nooitgedacht we were met at the station by a large number of armed Boers, and escorted by them to the Commandant's office, where our names, numbers, and regiment were taken down. Lighted by flares, we entered a large 11½ acre wired enclosure, then holding the Glosters, Royal Irish Fusiliers, and Suffolks; the former two from Nicholson's Nek, and the Eastern County Regiment from Colesberg. They had been entrained at Pretoria just in time to miss being relieved by our forces.

We were very tired and hungry. Some rusks were given us, the Commandant saying that was all he could do, and his own men would have to go short in consequence. Some of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, however, most kindly brewed some coffee and gave it to us; then, rolling ourselves in our blankets or cloaks, we were soon asleep.

We formed ourselves into a mess, and elected one man to draw rations at

the appointed times, and gradually settled down to a life of weariness, dust-storms, vermin, and short rations. We tented in little groups, not altogether. In about a fortnight we were rejoined by our convalescent comrades Blyth and Weedon.

The existing single-wire fence was strengthened by double cross-entanglements; electric plant and lights were placed in position, the posts being some forty yards apart. Stores could be purchased at famine prices from Anderson's Stores, near by. A narrow stream running through one end of the enclosure sufficed for drinking, cooking, and washing purposes.

During the first fortnight the 18th Yeomanry Regiment, consisting of the D.C.O.'s, the Dublins (two companies), and the Belfast Company, some 450 men, came in. They had been captured at Lindley under Colonel Spragge. The Lincolns under Colonel Robert, and a squadron of Scots Greys from Nitrals Nek, also joined us later, till with details we numbered 1,800 men. Corporal Haly and one of the D.C.O.'s escaped one Sunday after a church parade, in this way. Those of the British troops who cared to attend service were allowed outside the gate within a rough hollow square whose sides were the enclosure itself and the armed Boer guard, most of whom, at this time, were Zaps, the Johannesburg Police. At these church parades, the officers grouped themselves apart from the men, around the senior commanding officer, who acted as chaplain. Being on parole, they would walk about after the service within the limits prescribed by their parole, instead of returning to the enclosure with the men.

At the dismissal of a particular church parade, Haly and the D.C.O. strolled over and mingled with the group of officers, unnoticed by the Boer guard, being well dressed in leather putties, riding breeches, spurs, &c. Then, walking with some officers to that part of the stream used by them as a bathing place, the two Yeomen laid down in the long grass till evening. They had five days' provisions concealed on them, and when it was dark enough to move they started off across the hills for Ermelo, getting to the British lines in seven days. They picked up a native who guided them, and provisioned them when their own stock failed.

Trooper F. J. B. Lee had seven weeks' severe illness in the Boer Dutch Red Cross Ambulance train, standing in the siding at Nooitgedacht Station. This train consisted of five carriages, two of them being fitted with bunks for the patients, the remaining three having berths for doctors and nurses, or for stores and cooking. There were also several large marquees near at hand under the same management.

One day, an attempt was made by the Boers to count the prisoners, in which they were assisted by Colonel Spragge of the D.C.O.'s, then the senior commanding officer. This procedure was bitterly resented, and resisted as far as possible, by the prisoners. Harland, of the Belfast Company of Yeomanry, and of the well-known firm of shipbuilders, was struck brutally on the side of the face by a big, black-bearded Boer. Richards, of ours, who saw the action, called him a coward, whereupon Richards was marched off under escort to a corrugated iron railway van, which had been dragged off the line near the compound, for a prison.

The brute who had committed the outrage was frothing at the mouth,



charged his rifle, played with the trigger, and looked like shooting, while the prisoners gathered together with murmurings and cursings. Things looked bad, till the commandant's attention was called to this fellow when he was ordered out. F. J. B. Lee obtained permission to accompany Harland to the hospital, but was stopped at the gate of the enclosure by the guards, Harland going on alone.

McIlwraith obtained permission to take Richards's blankets to him,\* but on reaching the prison van was himself unceremoniously bundled therein, "for he was one of the same gang," they said.

With ten others they were kept in that unlighted and insufficiently ventilated hole for twelve hours without other food than a pailful of par-boiled and unsweetened mealies—and without any sanitary conveniences whatever.

Richards was tried by a rough court-martial, and after several days' confinement was discharged. McIlwraith, however, was kept in that vile place for fully a week longer, and had altered very much for the worse when he did return. He never thoroughly recovered, and eventually died at Reitz of enteric. Those of us who were with him in captivity and who watched him afterwards, believe that his death was due to this unjust incarceration in that foul van at *Nooitgedacht*.

We had heard continuous firing of heavy guns for upwards of a fortnight. It was Roberts's advance eastward from Pretoria, and Buller's advance northward from Standerton. At last train loads of fugitives, furniture, guns, horses, cattle, and mules began to pass down the line near us towards Barberton.

On August 28th and 29th Boer commandos began to trek past the compounds, to take up positions in our rear. For two days and a night a strange, unkempt crowd of undisciplined men passed, as well as flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, kaffir boys with spare horses and pack horses; and veldt waggons piled with furniture and crowded with women and children, slowly creaked by, drawn by ill-assorted oxen and mules. Khaki-painted guns lumbered or rattled by, accompanied generally by men in the blue-and-white uniform of the Staat's Artillerie. The Irish and Italian Commandos passed with their green puggarees and cocks' plumes. And all the time the big guns were heard, and as the time of our release approached the bark of the pom-pom reached our ears.

Every one was excited. Buried field-glasses were dug out, and our hands held them to anxious and straining eyes. The road up the valley towards Waterval Onder seemed filled with endless odds and ends of warfare, and group after group of mounted men rode up to us and passed on. Trains with hardly a train's length between them slowly crawled by; the engines were packed to the funnels with furniture and men.

At last the stream of fugitives thinned; the rearmost went by at the gallop. Some of them were American cow-boys, who, in reply to our kind

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\* This was the sort of spontaneously kind thing that would occur to these McIlwraith boys to do. I remember noting one of them on a pitilessly rainy and chill day pressing upon a comrade a long black mackintosh with which he would have been better off himself.—*Author*.

inquiries as to why they were hurrying so, replied that our "flying artillery" were coming down the valley, and "they'd got to git."

On August 30th at about noon came the order to prepare to leave. Then was there a feverish packing of cooking-tins, and grillers made of barbed wire; and of billies made of bully-beef tins. About 2 p.m. the gates were opened, and the half-famished British prisoners of war left their "cage" for freedom.

T. Lee, who had been camping with the D.C.O.'s, was taken to Barberton with them on the morning of the release of the greater number of the rest of the prisoners. The Boers said that, as the D.C.O.'s were so wealthy, they might as well go on paying for their keep, so the quarter which they occupied was suddenly surrounded, and some forty of them were marched out of the enclosure to the station.

Large numbers of the Boer rearguard were about burning the huge stacks of timber at the station, and such waggons as could not be removed. Attachés of various nationalities were busy photographing us and everything of interest.

General Ben Viljoen, who released us, made a little speech, which concluded with the words "and I hope the time is not far away when, instead of being enemies, we shall be very good friends," at which we cheered.

Directed by a couple of Boers, the 1,800 ragged, unkempt, and hungry released men began a weary march, heavily laden with cooking things, blankets, and great-coats. Here and there on our flanks, parties of mounted Boers in line, facing us, prevented any wandering from the direct route.

We reached Helvetia, where the British advance parties were engaging the Boer rearguard. Next day we took train to Pretoria, where we stayed a fortnight in British rest camps, and where we were issued extra rations and an entirely new outfit, including arms.

Sergeant Tomlin and Sergeant-Farrier Meek went into the Imperial Yeomanry Hospital. Trooper Robertson obtained a post on the Imperial Yeomanry Staff at Pretoria.

A Court of Inquiry was held upon the surrender at Senekal. Sergeant Scott and Trooper F. J. B. Lee were selected to give evidence in the case. When this had been recorded it was certified by the remainder of the ex-prisoners then present.

Ultimately we reached Harrismith by way of Standerton, Newcastle, and Ladysmith; and several of us rejoined our company as soon as possible at Bethlehem. (See pages 308 and 316).

F. J. B. LEE,  
6315, 34th Company I.Y.

## APPENDIX V.

### A BALLAD OF THE 34TH.\*

"SERGEANT-MAJOR ROLLER! Sergeant-Major Roller!" Do you hear  
the Major calling . . . galloping so prim?  
"Sergeant-Major Roller! Sergeant-Major Roller!" And smart the  
Major's looking and soldier-like and slim!  
The call comes up so frequently, we know no passing whim  
Makes Sergeant-Major Roller indispensable to him.

In barracks, on parade, or in the fighting-line  
Our Dalbiao was soldier-like by every soldier sign;  
He liked our Sergeant-Major, but he cut his liking fine  
For us soldiers who were "amateurs," and he called us "beastly swine!"  
And 'twas "Sergeant-Major Roller! Sergeant-Major Roller! Will you  
keep your bally yeoman to his work!  
Sergeant-Major Roller! Sergeant-Major Roller! Will you double the  
fatigues of those that shirk!"

That was his soldier way, but if we chanced to meet  
This martinet in private, or out upon the street,  
A sweeter-mannered man than he ne'er passed the time o' day,  
If many women sighed for him—small wonder, all I say.

Down south, in Table Bay, we saw great ships upon all sides,  
And just above, round Maitland Camp, we took our practice rides.  
First taste of veldt and kopje work our Major gave us then,  
He rubbed it in and roundly swore, "By Christ! he'd make us men!"

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\* These verses were composed—I cannot say written, for they were simply committed to memory—four or five months after the Senekal affair. They are published at the request of comrades, several of whom are dead. Another excuse for their publication might perhaps be found in the fact that, however crude they may appear to outsiders, they undoubtedly struck, at the time they were "made up"—soon after the commencement of the "guerilla warfare"—some note that must have been unconsciously humming in the memories of many of us, for they appealed to almost all of us, and for a season were in demand. The call has reference to a favourite or constant one of our Major, see Chapter IV. page 58.

So 'twas, "Sergeant-Major Roller! Sergeant-Major Roller!  
 "Number Threes—Lod Horses—Go, give it to 'em hot!  
 "Sergeant-Major Roller! Sergeant-Major Roller!  
 I wish we were in action, the beggars would be shot!"

We marched by day, by night we marched, and the way we marched was  
 far,  
 We pitched our camps to the night wind's moan and the tune of the  
 Morning Star.

We are Comrades, we are Comrades, by the days that we have dwelt  
 In the land of weary distances of dreary khaki veldt!

By the amethyst and emerald where the peach and wattle bloom  
 In the orchard by the kloofside where the distant kopjes loom!

By the passing of the bottle—and the water running low—  
 And a thousand little kindly things whereof—we know—we know!

By the clink of bit and stirrup, and the riding knee to knee,  
 We may not forget the debts that bind the units Me and Thee!

And as we galloped across the veldt in the hours before the day,  
 "Right shoulder up" to the Southern Cross or straight for the Milky Way,  
 We heard the Major's clear-cut voice, the tones that men obey,  
 "Sergeant-Major Roller! Sergeant-Major Roller! your place is with your  
 Company, and don't forget it, Sir!  
 "Sergeant-Major Roller! Sergeant-Major Roller! if your Company should  
 straggle, Christ God, don't let it, Sir!"

We watched by day, by night we watched, and the guards we did were  
 long,  
 But we thought of home 'till the bugles blew the refrain of a Sunrise  
 Song!

We are Comrades—we are Comrades, by the price that we have paid,  
 By the tale of Sick and Wounded, and the Graves that we have laid!

O Senekal! O Senekal! and the fighting to the east!  
 If we didn't get a bellyful, we got a decent feast.  
 Some took their danger mildly—not minding in the least—  
 As up the dusty, stony street they heard the Major shout,  
 "Sergeant-Major Roller! Sergeant-major Roller! let's get up on the  
 kopje and turn the beggars out!"

A very simple matter that—a twenty-minute ride!  
 But boulders rolled and horses fell upon the kopje side,  
 And out upon the kopje top there was no place to hide  
 And 'twas "Sergeant-Major Roller! Sergeant-Major Roller! dismount  
 your men," he cried,  
 And then—with hand upon his throat—' Ah God! No! Take 'em  
 back!"—he died.

The order came, but came too late—for most of us at least,  
And now it seemed *none* might be spared from this little Mauser feast ;  
For four of our good comrades all matters mundane ceased !

We did not turn those burghers out, we did the best we could,  
Since only six of us came back where thirty-one had stood.  
The *best* we did that blasted day was hardly reckoned good !

And Roller ? Roller was the last to come, a smile upon his face,  
A wounded man that he'd picked up was riding in his place,  
And his mare was prancing round as if 'twas some Gymkhana race.

"Sergeant-Major Roller ! Sergeant-Major Roller !" we shall hear the  
Major calling you in silent nights to come !

"Sergeant-Major Roller ! Sergeant-Major Roller !" the sound will be a  
memory of memories to some !

*Mr.* Roller ! *Mr.* Roller ! Will you listen to us O !  
We hope your next promotion will not be overalow !  
You're a "gentleman in khaki"—and out of it—and so—  
If it pleases you to ride to—well—why, we will also go !



## APPENDIX VI

### TWEEFONTEIN

*"Day was just breaking as I got on the top of the hill, bearing a stretcher, —Christmas morning. Dead and wounded men were lying there in scores. The gun-pits were like shambles. On the inner crest the 84th chaps were lying almost in a line as they had been mowed down as they came up the hill. Their Captain (Hall) was in front of them, literally shot to bits. Our casualties cannot be less than 900 all told."*—From the letter of an eye-witness, dated January 8th, 1902.

WHEN the little remnant of the Old 84th Company, together with all that remained of the other old Companies of the 11th Battalion, was, on June 18th, 1901, at Harri Smith, ordered home, we left with an understanding that a body of "The New Yeomanry" was taking our place. We met very few of them; we never knew what manner of men they were. There was no time for that, for the home-going men, just off a long trek, were allowed in Harri Smith a stay of barely three days, and there was much to do. We knew, however, that the 11th Battalion still remained; that its composition as to Companies would be pretty much the same; there were still 84th, 85th, 86th, 88rd, and 62nd Companies. Such a fact could not fail to be a binding link to men who had so many memories hovering over the mere sound of the words of their Company number. "Fall in, 84!" "Keep extended, 84!" "Steady, 84!" or, as we once heard an officer affectionately exclaim, "You poor blasted, — 84!" Did not "84" stand, or seem to stand, for about thirty-four times thirty-four of the rest of our life? But there were other links. Eight or nine of our old comrades had elected to throw their lot in with the new men. Two of them held commissions, others were to get promotions or commissions. Then Colonel Firman was still to lead the Battalion, or the Column to which it belonged. When we should arrive home we knew that we should scan the war telegrams with a new and strange interest. We should see what the "New 84th" did to "keep its end up." We should run down the morning casualty-list regularly, and a sharpened attention would be sure to spot the old loved figures 84, whenever fate ordered them to appear.

For some months the new men remained, for the most part, in and about Harri Smith, training—for few of them had been horsemen in any

sense of the word. Not a few undesirables were discarded and sent home, but the rest gradually shaped into a useful Battalion. They went on treks over our old ground—Bethlehem, the Brandwater Basin, Neccamo Nek, &c. They saw fighting, sickness, and other tribulations; this we learnt not only from the lists, but from interesting letters from old comrades. Of the old men, Hall was a Captain, Agnew a full Lieutenant, and Heenan a Lieutenant. Agnew, in a letter I received in December, was full of hope for the future of the new 84th; he sent a message from Hall; told me that my pony "Prinsloo" was still going strong; and gave news for other men should I chance to meet them. It was the kindly, chatty letter of a good comrade and a good soldier, and it was the last I was to get from him.

Then the blockhouse line from Harrismith to Bethlehem needed to be guarded, and the principal duty fell to Colonel Firman's Column. The ghastly Christmas morning tragedy of Tweefontein followed. The main facts of this sad affair cannot be better told than they were in those concise telegrams of the Commander-in-Chief, as we read them in the issues of *The Times* of December 27th and 30th, and in the casualty-lists which followed.

I felt that the story of the 84th Company would not be quite complete without the sequel of Tweefontein. Of our old comrades, Hall and Agnew had fallen, and others had barely escaped a similar fate. Some were prisoners for a few days. Lieutenant Hardwick—cheery Hardwick of the Pom-Pom, and young Watney, who had taken over our Maxim, also lost their lives, with others of other Companies of the old 11th Battalion.

Here at home so many people sagely shook their heads and ventured to attribute the disaster to Christmas festivities! Although I heard this remark until I wearied of it, I rarely answered it, because the conditions of the war and of active service in the field are so loosely understood at home; nevertheless, to a survivor of Tweefontein I was careful to put this question straight, and the reply was an unequivocal "No! Not even a rum issue!" Now an active service rum issue would not make a fly careless, as is best known to Quartermaster-Sergeants.

To survivors I wrote for information, and I have received some interesting letters, and I have also been privileged to read several letters written to others. Extracts from these and the concise telegrams before referred to shall tell the tale. The story so told can make no pretence of being complete, it can be a mere outline only. Many brave deeds of that night will ever remain unrecorded.

Of the occurrences at Tweefontein Kopje on December 24th, the eve of the disaster, that have been related to me, and which do not appear in the letters, two are worthy of careful note. The first is the removal from the kopje camp of the infantry of the column to a camp some little distance away, and the second is that on the afternoon of that day two armed Boers captured one of the Kaffir boys of the column within about a thousand yards of the high summit, and under the very eyes of the camp. After, apparently, getting information from him, they coolly shot him, and although fire was opened upon them from the camp they got away. It would seem clear that such a thing would hardly have been attempted had not the enemy been in considerable force in the neighbourhood.

*From "The Times," December 27th, 1901.*

The following telegram from Lord Kitchener has been received at the War Office:—

JOHANNESBURG, December 26th,  
7.15 a.m.

Rundie reports on night of December 24 Colonel Firman's camp on Tweefontein was successfully rushed by considerable force of Boers under De Wet.

I fear that casualties were heavy.

Firman's Column consisted of 34th, 35th, 36th, and 58rd Companies Imperial Yeomanry, one gun 79th Battery R.F.A., and one Pom-Pom. They were guarding head of blockhouse line from Harriarith to Bethlehem.

1st and 2nd Imperial Light Horse have gone in pursuit of Boers.

*From "The Times," December 30th, 1901.*

The following telegram from Lord Kitchener has been received at the War Office:—

JOHANNESBURG, December 26,  
10.55 p.m.

10 p.m., 26th Dec.—In continuation of my telegram of 6.30 a.m. to-day, I now send further information regarding attack on Firman's Column.

Major Williams, South Stafford Regiment, was in temporary command during Firman's absence.\* Column was encamped on slope of solitary kopje; southern side of kopje almost precipitous, and an outpost held edge of it. Northern slopes, on which camp was pitched, are gentle, and on this side outposts pushed well out; position naturally strong, and also has been entrenched. Moonlight, but cloudy.

Detailed report not received, but it is stated Boers climbed up precipitous southern side of kopje and, collecting near top at 2 a.m., suddenly attacked pickets on summit in superior force before men in camp could get clear of their tents. Boers rushed through, shooting them down as they came out; officers shot trying to stem tide.

Lieutenant Harwich (*sic*) (Hardwick) himself opened fire with Pom-Pom and shot through head while firing. Lieutenant Watney, Imperial Yeomanry, killed heading a charge. No panic, all did best, but Boers too strong, and once picket overwhelmed had all advantage.

Including killed and wounded, about half column are now at Elands River Bridge; remainder are prisoners.

Fifteen-pounder fired two rounds, then jammed; detachment stood by gun and were shot round it.

Lieutenant Scarlett was missed and then overlooked and left behind. He saw two waggon loads of dead and wounded Boers taken away, mostly hit in first attack on pickets. Major Haag, who was left in camp, wounded, confirms this, saying he saw Boer dead lying all over the ground at daylight.

Boers, who apparently numbered about 1,200, under De Wet, behaved well, leaving men to look after wounded.

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\* Colonel Firman after almost two years' continuous service in the field had been given a short leave of absence.

Imperial Light Horse were fourteen miles distant at Elands River Bridge; heard at 4.30 a.m., and arrived on scene 6.40. After breathing horses, galloped after Boers, who by that time all falling back south end Langberg. Boers succeeded getting broken country before Imperial Light Horse could account for more than two or three. Once Boers reached Langberg Imperial Light Horse could do nothing more against superior numbers in such a country.

JOHANNESBURG, December 29,

7 a.m.

The prisoners taken in the attack on Firman's Camp have been released, and have arrived at Bethlehem.

In the first telegrams concerning the casualties, fifty-eight officers and men of the Battalion were reported killed and nine wounded, and of these twenty-one of the killed belonged to the 34th Company, viz. :—

Captain S. E. Hall, Lieutenant H. M. Agnew, Sergeant-Major J. Reed, Sergeant F. Hewitson, Sergeant W. Painting, Lance-Sergeant J. Herbert, Corporal A. E. Snook, Privates A. Stoot, J. Kedge, W. J. Bunning, B. T. Meyer, T. Parry, F. J. Stringer, H. G. Unwin, G. D. Smith, H. Mackender, J. D. Cooper, A. Denham, T. Laity, E. J. Campbell, W. Numan.

11th Battalion I.Y. (Gun Section attached):—Lieutenant J. S. Watney, Corporal J. H. Milton, Privates B. Davies, F. H. Hellyer, — Johnson.

On December 31st, in the list of wounded ten were of the 34th, out of a total of forty-six wounded. Four died of wounds.

On January 1st, three more officers were reported "died of wounds." One man additional killed, and three men additional missing, 34th.

On January 2nd, one man additional wounded, 34th.

*Extracts from a private letter dated March 7th, 1902.*

"DEAR —

Tweefontein is about thirty miles from Harrismith, in a direct line to Bethlehem, about half-way between. It is a solitary kopje, with a long slope up one side. We were camped on the slope; the 34th lines were nearest to the top, about twenty yards down.

The Boers came up the precipice in single file (the first two hundred taking off their boots at the bottom); there was only one place they could get up, and that a very difficult one. They first collected on the top until there were several hundreds of them, and the first thing we knew was that they were within twenty yards of our tents, firing straight through the camp.

We got the men out as soon as possible, and tried to rush the Boers off the top, but we only got within twenty yards of them when nearly every one was killed or wounded. Three men and myself were the only ones who were not touched out of our Squadron (34th) who attempted to get on the top.

The squadrons lower down the hill had no chance, as directly the Boers saw they had outnumbered the first lot they marched straight down through the camp, firing all the way. It was all over in about half an hour."

*Extract from a letter dated Harriemith, December 26th, 1901.*

"It is awful lying inactive here, in hospital, all night long, the noise of the ambulances coming in, and then the tramp of the stretcher-bearers through the ward, with their uncanny brown canvas stretchers, and the groans of the wounded as they move them on to their beds—it is indeed War. I am allowed up for three hours, but cannot use my legs yet. I fainted the first time I sat up, which shows how weak I am.

. . . . .

Some of the wounded are quite naked; all have lost their boots and jackets."

*Extracts from a private letter, dated 2nd I.L.H., Elands River Bridge, January 1st, 1902.*

"I don't think any of us will forget last Christmas Day.

— rode over from Tweefontein to our Camp at Elands River Bridge with the news. He arrived at a few minutes before 5 a.m.

Within two hours we were at Tweefontein, nearly the whole regiment, with the gun. I think the distance is nearly fourteen miles, and as every man was asleep, and the horses had to be saddled, that was making good time. But of course we were too late to do any good. We drove the few remaining Boers off the hill, and gave them a chase for a few miles, but they were trekking to the Longburg, and soon got into those hills where we would have no chance with them.

I then went on to the hill and there spent the most gruesome Christmas Day I ever expect to see. The wounded were all collected near the Ambulance, about sixty-eight in all. The dead we then collected, and dug a trench just below where the hospital was. It was hard digging, and took most of the day. I helped to bury six officers—Williams, Watney, Hall, Hudson, Agnew, Hardwick—and fifty-two men were buried in another grave. Grice and Dr. Reid died here, and were buried here, Crawley in Harriemith, where — tells me the Boers in the Refugee Camp held a sort of jubilee while the funeral was going on.

The Camp was a sorry sight when we got back to it. The Boers had set fire to everything that would burn that they could not carry away, and most of the tents they had out and slashed about. There were dead horses and men lying all over the place.

Williams seemed to have been hit in many places, and to have been bandaged up in both feet and in the side before he received the final shot."

*Extracts from a letter dated Albertina, O.R.C., December 31st, 1901.*

"Agnew and I came out from England together nearly two years ago, he in the 84th and myself in the 35th. Although, as a trooper, I did not see so much of him, since having commissions we have been great friends. I went on leave with him to Durban last June. He was a very quiet, plucky chap, and passionately fond of soldiering. He was always most cheerful and most eager, and was altogether an ideal officer.

. . . . .



There were only about 400 yeomen and about 1,500 Dutchmen. The officers all did their best, and I have been told by a trooper that Agnew got together a few men and made for the guns in order to try and save them. As he approached the guns he was shot dead.

My Squadron (62nd) was the only one in the Regiment not there, and we feel this disaster most awfully. Captain Hall, Hindson, Cunningham, and Agnew were all old Yeomen, and we all came out together. Now I am one of the only ones left, and I feel their loss most dreadfully.

I know that you will like to hear that, in spite of the awful confusion, darkness, and terror, that Agnew died doing his duty to the very last. Captain Hall kept the 84th together until he himself died riddled with holes."

*Extracts from a letter to T. F. A. Agnew, Esq., dated Hospital, Howick, Natal, January 4th, 1902.*

"I should like to try and express the deep sympathy which every officer and man of 84th Squadron feels for you and your family in the sad loss you have just sustained.

Your son fell as every soldier would wish when his time comes, and he was respected and beloved of all ranks.

As soon as I can leave hospital I shall send you his flask, which I am in possession of. This flask was in his pocket at the time of his death, and a Dutchman who was looking through his pockets after his death took it out and placed it on the ground beside him, evidently intending to take it away, but omitted to do so, and as I was lying about a yard away, wounded, I secured it, thinking you would probably like to have it."

*Extract from a letter dated Brindisi, O.R.C., January 2nd, 1902.*

"We fought hard for our gun (the Maxim) but it was no good, they were five to one, and had the best of the position as well. Of ten men around our gun we had three killed and four wounded, all badly. Poor little Watney died like a hero, calling on us to charge. My dog was shot dead at my feet. As I rose to smash the gun I was held up from behind; one Boer seized me, while another put the muzzle of his rifle to my ear, and I had no option. The gun . . . is spoilt by the bullets which struck it."

*Extracts from a letter dated Brindisi, January 2nd, 1902.*

"We scrambled for our rifles, which were strapped round the tent-poles, and we rushed outside. Ten of us took up a position on which there was no cover below the Boers; the bullets were coming round us like hail-stones. We were then firing at them at about eighty yards. We stayed there about half an hour, lying down flat in the long grass firing at their rifle flashes. All of a sudden we saw a lot of men coming through the tents. They came right up to us, and then we heard them talking Dutch. I yelled out, 'They are Boers!' They came up to within about five yards of us. A corporal next but one to me was shot dead, poor chap! I opened my magazine and fired at them. Then we all fired. They threw their hands up and ran back, leaving a few dead. We then began to find it a bit hot where we were. So we ran to where about fifty of the East

ents (53rd) were holding two stone sangars. We made a stand there for about half an hour before we surrendered. However I got through safely I don't know. So terrible was the fire, our faces were all scratched with the splinters from the rocks which the bullets struck. The men were lying killed and wounded round us. It was a most sickening sight. The first Boer who called on us to surrender one of our lieutenants shot dead with his revolver. . . . A chap who was firing next to me must have felt a bit uncomfortable, I think, for he tried to shift his place, but just as he stood about half up he got three bullets in him.

Before we surrendered all our officers were shot. I don't think there were more than ten East Kents (53rd) out of the fifty in that place who surrendered; the rest were all killed or wounded.

After we surrendered there was not another shot fired, except by the Boers who murdered our niggers \* . . . they marched us off. It was just beginning to be daylight. . . . There must have been 1,500 Boers, and we were only 400 strong. As they were taking us off General Rundle was close by, but he only had 900 men. He started shelling, some of the shells coming very close to us. . . . There were 202 of us prisoners, including some Horse Artillery and Manchester M.I. It was De Wet who captured us, with four commandants and field-cornets. . . . He left the same night with 1,000 men, and left us with an escort of 40 Boers. They had our guns in their laager.

The next morning they marched us off again. Some of the poor fellows had no boots, for the Boers took every stitch of clothing off us and gave us their old rags . . . they left us on the borders of Basutoland."

*Extracts from a letter dated Ficksburg, January 8th, 1902.*

"About 2 a.m. I was awakened by a terrific crash of rifle-fire on the crest of the hill. I jumped up, pulled on my boots, and snatching up my rifle and bandolier, ran into the lines. Bullets were swishing through the lines and the horses were frantic. . . . Our orders were, in the event of the camp being attacked, to stand to arms in our own lines and await orders. Our guns were silent, and I guessed from the fire which was being poured into us that the enemy had carried the top of the hill.

\* Twenty-five dead Kaffirs (besides other casualties) were not included in the published lists, nevertheless they are a very real and dreadful detail in the story of the affair of Tweefontein. I have read a letter in which it was stated that Kaffirs were there tied to waggon-wheels and burnt. It is at least not improbable that some of the natives were tied to wheels to be sjamboked and so shot (see p. 296), for the waggon-wheel is recognised by the less enlightened burgher as a handy whipping-post, nor that a waggon, with its silent victim attached, may have been burnt in the hurry and stress of battle. But it is quite unnecessary to draw on either the facts or the imagination further than this simple, naked, ghastly evidence that twenty-five dead non-combatants—servants—affords; no wounded in such case, be it understood, barring accidents which darkness and confusion might excuse in the most skilful man-hunter; but such kind of barbarism (if the genial politician will excuse the word) is usually very precise—and methodical.

The men were going down like rotten sheep. Seven of one tent were hit as they came out. . . .

Meanwhile the 36th and 53rd had got into the sangars to the left and right of camp, and the 34th made an effort to retake the hill. How they got on, poor chaps, the casualty lists tell. The rifle fire got hotter and hotter. Suddenly a mob of men rushed through the waggons into our lines. I could not see whether they were Boers or other men. There was a burst of firing in our lines and then quiet. I tumbled that the game was up, and started to smash the gun. . . . While trying to do so I was held up from behind."

*Extracts from a letter dated Ficksburg, January 11th, 1902.*

"The camp was situated on a kopje called Green Kop, or Christmas Kop as the Boers called it, near Tweefontein.

Several attempts were made to retake the ridge, but the officers being nearly all shot down the men were thrown into confusion through being without a leader. . . . Boers and British were mixed up together, stopping the fire of those that happened to hold positions in the camp. Our Maxim was a little way down the ridge, on the left of the camp, and was loaded ready to fire, but the officer gave the order not to fire until further notice, it being dangerous for our men.

By this time the Boers held the whole camp, and they immediately started getting the guns and as many of the waggons as possible away, burning the rest, and moving off at 4.30 a.m., taking the prisoners, numbering six officers and 203 men, with them. As the Boers were clearing away, General Rundle's reinforcements began to arrive, and started to shell us. We prisoners, at this new development, began to back away from our own guns, as the shells came unpleasantly near. General Rundle managed to recapture three waggons and some prisoners. The Boers retired towards the Longberg Mountains in three parties, where they assembled all the prisoners, and then started to swap clothes with us. They took my tunic and putties here, but left me my trousers until I reached De Wet's laager. In the evening they gave me a ragged old coat in exchange. . . . They got from me, in camp, two new drill tunics, Goertz glasses, kodak, fifteen pounds in gold, my watch. . . .

We then marched in the direction of Reitz, going twenty-five miles before reaching their laager. . . .

The Boers then went away with the guns and waggons, leaving a small escort with us. . . .

Some of us managed to "pinch" a waggon cover to sleep under that night, tearing it up so as to carry it for the next night. We moved at 3 a.m. next morning, going back over our old road to the Langberg range, leaving fourteen wounded to march into Bethlehem. We marched thirty-six miles that day, halting four miles from Spitz Kop—obliged to halt owing to the men being footsore, several having no boots at all. Next day we marched twenty miles to Naauwpoort Nek, where some Boers gave us some mealie flour and some sheep. We marched at daylight

next day, arriving at the Caledon River at 2.30 p.m. Before crossing into Joel's territory, Basutoland, we were stripped of everything, and given ragged things in exchange. . . . — had only a shirt and socks left him; we did laugh. We stopped on the other side for the rest of the day, had a bath, and getting very little to eat. We got a sack each to cover us, which was better than nothing. We marched to — next day, where we managed to get some rations. We reached Brindisi next day. . . . We stopped at Brindisi four days, moving off at 6 a.m., arriving at Thlotse at 4.30 p.m. We reached Ficksburg next day. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

We were with the Boers four days, doing 26 miles the first day, 26 the next, 20 the next, and 28 the next."

*Extracts from a letter dated Ficksburg, January 17th, 1902.*

"It was hot while we were at it. The Boers must have lost very heavily, as chaps were shooting each other point-blank down in the camp. It was just murder. I thought my number was up. One of our chaps was lying in the lines with his leg smashed by an explosive bullet, and shot a Boer dead who tried to take one of our horses. . . .

We had been helping the hospital orderlies to carry down the wounded. It was a ghastly job. One poor chap kept beseeching us to put him out of mess. The real Boers were very decent chaps, and did all they could, but there were a good few foreigners with them, who were very bitter. One of them was jeering at me, but a Boer shut him up promptly and said to me, "Never mind him, old chap, he's only a — foreigner." De Wet himself sjamboked several of them freely when they attempted to loot the doctor's stores. . . .

The I.L.H. got within range and fired volleys at us, and Rundle's guns fired shrapnel, so that we nearly got put out by our own men. The Boers who were leading our ponies went hell for leather, and as I had neither saddle nor bridle I had a rough ride. . . .

It rained nearly all night, and as I had nothing on but my shirt and riding-breeches, I was not very comfortable. We had no blankets. One old burgher noticed my evil plight next morning, and gave me a white sweater he had on, asking me at the same time to return the favour if ever I saw any of their men equally badly off. . . . We had a savoury diet of raw mealie meal, which we had to cook as best we could.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was getting pretty hard by this time, and felt equal to anything, but on the fourth morning a French gentleman took my boots and breeches, so that I had the pleasure of walking twenty-seven miles in my socks, and I entered Basutoland classically attired in a shirt and sweater, and considerably thinner than I had been for years."

*Extract from a private letter dated near Harriemith, February 10th, 1902.*

"(Wainey's) last words were the order to charge, and, as you know, 'sudden hope.'"

*Extract from a private letter dated Durban Club, February 2nd, 1902.*

"I saw ——— (Watney) heading a rush to gain the slopes of a hill, when he fell shot at close range. It was one of the many gallant things done that night."

*Extract from a private letter dated Newcastle, Natal, February 14th, 1902.*

"Of ten of us who were with him (Watney) at the time, we had three killed and four wounded. He was cool and collected to the last, and charged to give me time to disable the Maxim. I am glad to say his heroism was not thrown away as the gun was useless to the enemy when they took it. He was shot through the heart, and his death was instantaneous."

"NYLSBROOM, TRANSVAAL,

"25th May, 1902.

("You remember this date!")

"DEAR OLD C——,

I am afraid you have given me rather a tall order when you ask for a full account of the disaster at Tweefontein. I am such a bad hand at writing, but I will be as explicit as possible.

The 34th, 35th, 36th, and 53rd Squadrons, the Gun Section, one 15-pounder, and one pom-pom (in charge of Lieutenant Hardwick) were camped on a solitary kopje at Tweefontein, about thirty miles from Harrismith on the Bethlehem road (not the old road we always used to go, but what is known as the Langberg Road. I have no doubt you remember that when you get over Elands River Bridge we used to turn to the right; the Langberg road goes round to the left of the kopje that faces the bridge coming from Harrismith). Well, the kopje at Tweefontein on which we were camped has a long, gradual slope on one side, with a small plateau on the top, and then there is a precipice.

The gun, pom-pom, and Maxim were on this plateau; the Yeomanry were camped on the slope, the 34th Squadron being the nearest to the top (about twenty yards off), then came, below us, the 36th, 53rd, and the 35th at the bottom. The 35th Squadron were doing outpost duty, and there was a picket on the edge of the precipice.

At two a.m. on Christmas morning we were awakened by bullets coming through the tents, and on getting outside you could see that the plateau was thick with Boers firing straight down through the Camp. I was sleeping in Captain Hall's tent. Agnew was with Stutfield.

Hall gave me orders to go down one row of our tents while he went down the other. We then went with most of the 34th to try and rush the top of the kopje, but before we got to the top most of the men were shot, and meeting Major Williams, of the South Staffords (who was in command of the Column during Colonel Firman's absence), he ordered us to lie down. We were within ten yards of the Boers, and the flash of the rifle was almost blinding in our faces. Before we had stopped there one minute Major Williams gave Captain Hall an order to send some men out to the

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\* The writer refers to the second anniversary of the Senekal Kopje fight when Dalbiac was killed.

left, as they were coming up on this flank. Hall then told me to take six men. I didn't much like the job, I tell you, as the men were being shot fast as they were lying down, and I thought that to get up was certain death. But I had to go, and managed to get there with a whole skin, but three of the men I took were shot dead before we got there. Directly I got out on the left I looked across to see what Hall was doing, and I saw the Boers streaming over the spot I had just left, and they rushed straight through the Camp. I must tell you that on arriving at my position on the left I found Agnew and Stutfield with about four men. We made a small stand for about fifteen minutes, and had some grand shooting at ten yards' range. After we had been there about five minutes Lieutenant Parsons, of 58rd, arrived with another four men, and we accounted for several Boers as they walked straight at us, firing as they came, and never crouched down for a second, and took not the slightest notice when the man next to them fell. At last we had to shift somewhere, but didn't know where to go, as our only exit was through the Camp, and we knew that there were several hundred Boers down there. Well, there were only two men, Agnew, Stutfield, Parsons, and myself left then, and immediately we got up to go Agnew was killed and Stutfield and Parsons wounded. I had two bullets through my pyjamas, one right across my stomach and the other through the leg. I saw that escape was impossible, so lay down beside the nearest man I could see and started to dress his wounds, and by this means I remained in Camp the whole time. I saw the Boers take away the guns and all the transport, and a waggon-load of their own killed. They also burnt all the tents and things they could not get away.

3. There was only one place they could get up the precipice (and our picket was on top of this, but the least said about them the better, I think), and the Boers came up here in single file, the first two hundred taking off their boots at the bottom. They then collected on top, and never fired a shot until there were about three hundred up there. Our strength was four hundred, theirs about twelve hundred. They retired just at daybreak. General Rundle was camped about two miles from us, but only had a few mounted troops.

Nearly all the men were hit with the Martini and expanding bullets; awful wounds.\* The Boers behaved very well to the wounded. It was an awful sight when it was all over, and we went round collecting the dead. There were six officers and fifty-two men, and about twenty-five natives. These were all laid out in three rows in the blazing sun all day, while trenches were being dug to put them in. You could put your flat in some of the poor chaps' heads where they had been hit by expanding bullets. It was awful to see the flies blowing in their mouths and eyes all day. The six officers were Major Williams, Captain Hall, Agnew, Hardwick, Watney (of Gun Section. Do you remember him? He was a trooper in the New Yeomanry, a fair-haired chap, that used to come and see — at Ficksburg), and Hudson. They were all buried in one grave, the men in another, the black boys in another. Three officers died next day—Captain

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\* Some witnesses prefer to believe that the severe nature of these wounds was chiefly due to recochetting bullets.



Grice (our Adjutant), Captain Crawley (58rd), and Dr. Reid, and men. I went into Harrismith with my pyjamas only.

Your pony, "Prinsloo," was not there; he was just then under treatment, and so escaped. I don't know of anything else of importance will end, and just catch a mail, I hope. Best love.

Yours very sincerely,

C. E

P.S.—Officers, wounded and prisoners:—

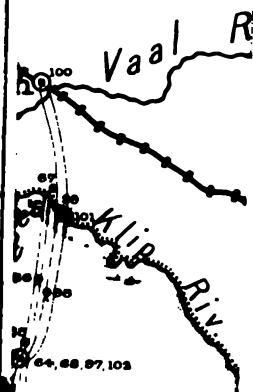
Wounded.—Stutfield (84th), Maclean (85th), French (85th), P (58rd), Mowatt (58rd), and Major Haag (second in command).

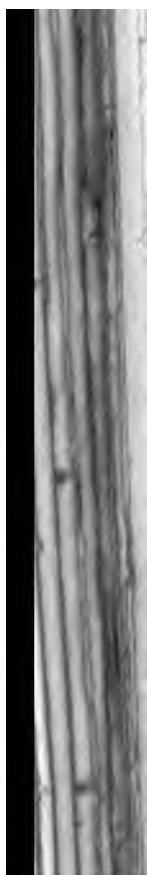
Prisoners.—Cunningham (85th), Stennet (86th), and Quarter Langley.

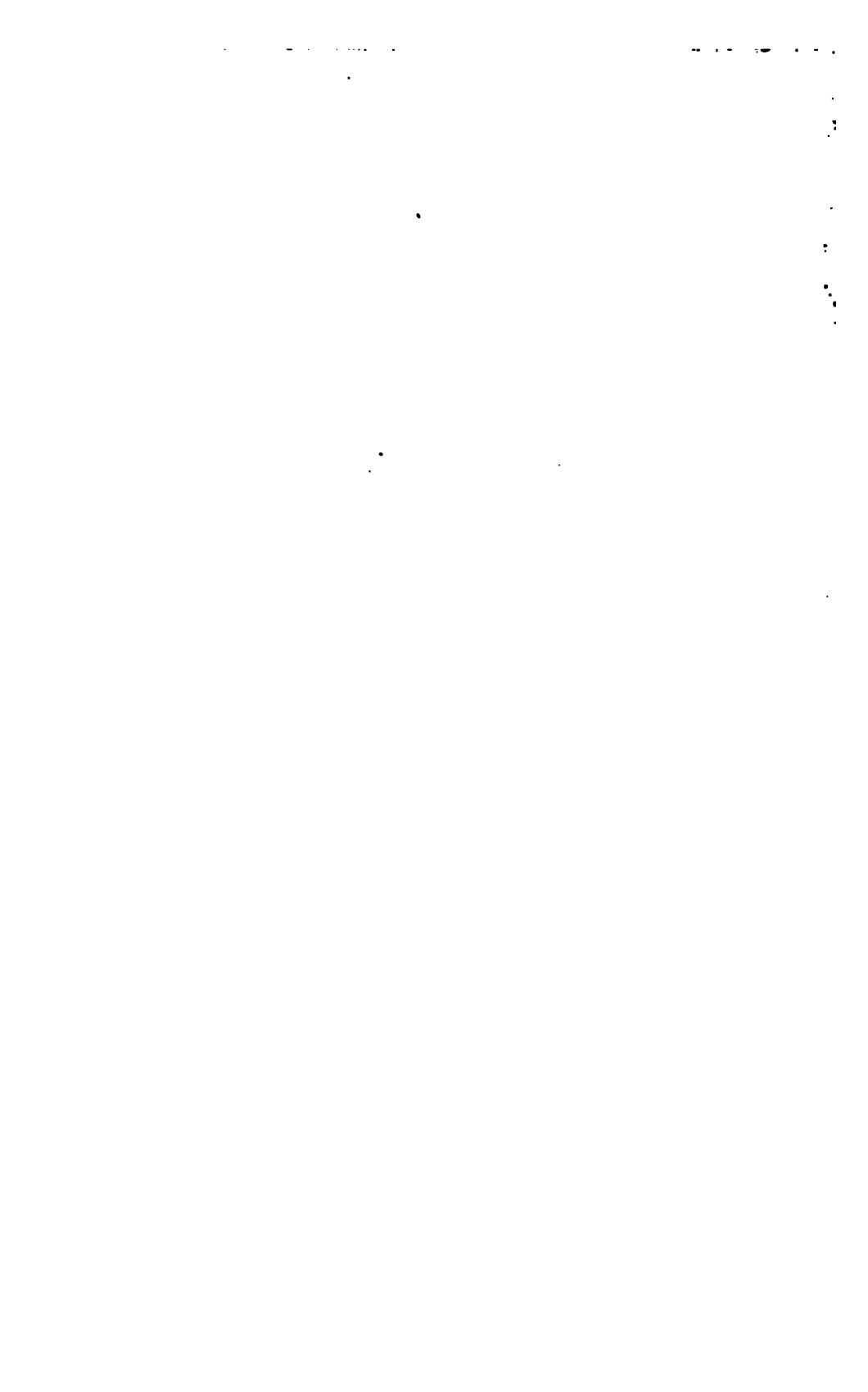
Scarlett (of R.F.A.), Mellish (85th), and myself got off.

In conclusion, the chief aim of this Appendix (VI.) is to show that our successors, the New 84th, took in the fight at Tweefontein. I assuredly, was a very noble share, and in spite of the final disastrous result of the engagement, we can only remember that part with its of sad pride and satisfaction that the honour of the 84th was kept and that that last glorious charge was led by old comrades.

A











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